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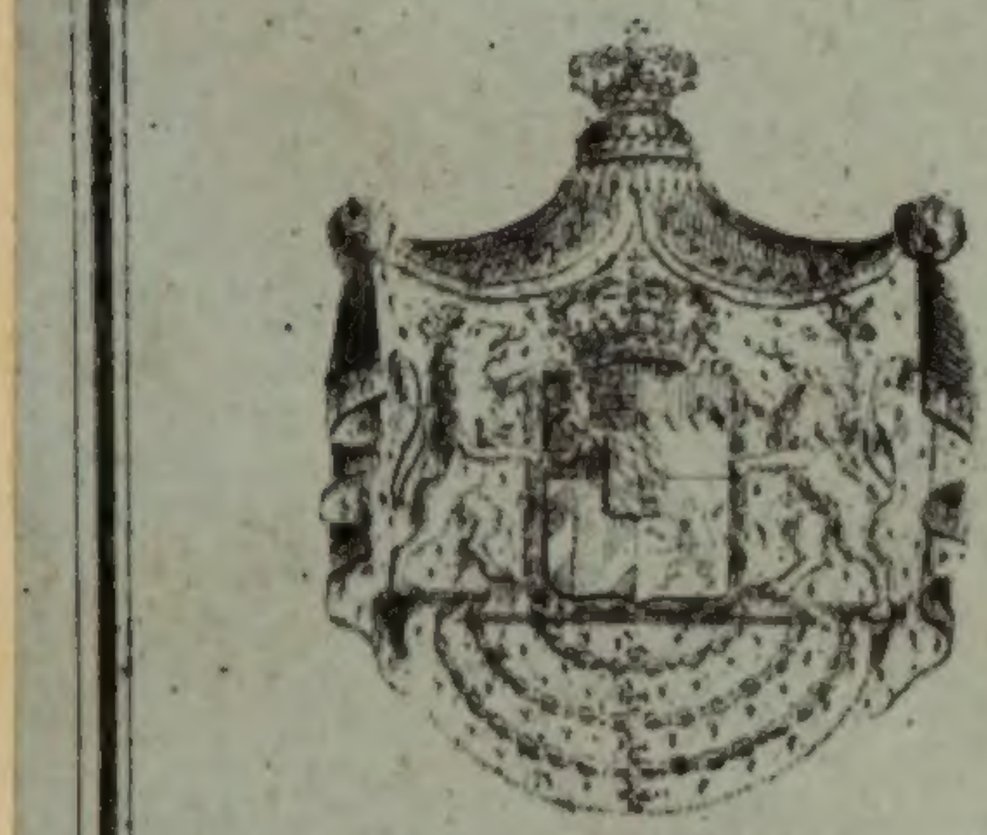

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THE

LIFE OF A LOVER.

VOL. V.

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ΔΙΕ

THE

LIFE OF A LOVER.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY SOPHIA LEE.

Honour, that spark of the celestial fire
Which above nature makes mankind aspire,
Ennobles the rude passions of our frame.
* * * * * * * * * * * *
The richest treasure of a gen'rous breast,
Which gives the stamp and standard to the rest.
MARQ. OF HALIFAX.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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THE

LIFE

OF A

LOVER.

LETTER CXXV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

HOW often has our sweet Cecilia declared, that I should one day or other unite with her in thinking no human being comparable to Mrs. Forrester!

Your engaging postscript, my charming friend unknown, has delighted me; and to shew my gratitude, I break through form on my side, thus to introduce to your acquaintance that very beautiful mind, which Heaven (no doubt, out of

pity to the other sex) thought proper to place, *incog.* as it were, in a mighty ordinary body.—How grievously have both Cecilia and I wanted you, my dear madam, during the last week! to consult with, fidget with, and for a hundred other friendly uses, which two persons who are obliged to attend entirely to themselves, can always make of the third.—However, the bustle is over, and we have been presented.—This era in the life of a fine lady, Cecilia passes over very coolly—nor would you hear one word on the subject, were it not for your humble servant.—I have snatched the dear creature's pen, seized her desk, and am resolved thus to break the ice—upon paper: —so even give me, dear lady Westbury, peaceable possession of your boudoir, till the men leave the dinner parlour—You may, perhaps, get a little flattery from your good lord, to amuse you at a more early hour:—mine, Heaven bless the honest soul! will not, I am certain, quit his bottle till he and Trevilian

have settled the affairs of the nation; of which I do not doubt but I shall have previous intelligence, by their sonorous voices, and certain angry thumps upon the table, not wholly unlike to those which once appalled the faithful esquire of the Knight of the Woeful Countenance.

* * * * * *

At my entreaty, our sweet friend has carried all her smiles and graces into the 'drawing room.—Hey!—what do I hear?—Oh, the malicious creature!—she is tuning her harp; and has left the doors open on purpose to distract my attention—What? my favourite song too!—Well—I was going to tell you—upon my honour, I do not know what—this mischievous harp puts every thing else out of my head; and while lady Westbury sweetly sings, my provoking pen, involuntarily, as you see, makes crotchets and quavers. Oh! I have an excellent thought—cotton most conveniently lies on the desk:—to shew that I have not read Homer for nothing, a little of it

goes into each ear—Sing away, my dearest; for were the saint whose name you bear now letting out her organ at my elbow, I question whether I should know that she was in the room.

I verily believe lady Westbury suspects me, so great is her modesty, of trying to rival her in your good graces, while, in truth, I am actuated by a more womanish reason: for I must unburden myself to some one, if even to a bundle of reeds, like Midas's queen of fabulous memory—or rather, perhaps, by the very same figure of speech; since paper was, I think, first made from a reed of Egypt. —Are you not astonished at my erudition?—I have, as you will discover in time, a magpie hoard of knowledge; and it is much the same thing to me, whether I lay up a pebble or a diamond.—I have been visiting at twenty houses this morning, without finding one woman who was not ready to listen to her own panegyric, but totally deaf to that of another person: and as to my mother, from

whom I might have hoped a little complacent attention, she always thinks the mention of a prettier dress than common, only a happy opportunity to introduce a discussion upon that well-frilled but undesired robe—a shroud.

What a delectable epistle has this musical fit of Cecilia's deprived you of!—I had it all in my head; and now I am in Anacreon's condition—

Still my Cremona answers Love.

I meant too, like a mirror, to receive beauty as I reflected it; while at some length I was informing you, *how* brilliant we both were in our dresses—*how* stately in our attendants—*how* graciously we were received—*how* generally we were admired, with many other *hows* of no less importance.—It is certain that our friend never appeared to more advantage. —An indefinable charm always accompanies motion in Cecilia.—You must recollect that Virgil attaches the idea so completely to beauty, that when Venus

has divested herself of every other characteristic, he says,

> And by her graceful walk the Queen of Love was known.

I think no disguise could hide Cecilia from me if she moved---a very rare perfection. Yet, in the present instance, her ease was but a triumph of reason over timidity.---Her dress was simple, though elegant---wholly white, with silver; and though fallen away, she appeared symmetry itself: sickness has however less impaired her looks than it would those of any other woman, for a consumptive habit gives a resplendent fairness and bloom to the complexion.

Lord help me! Before I cast my eyes on Lady Westbury, I was in wondrous good humour with myself and my finery---not to mention the Frenchman's three-hours' labour on my head, and the diamonds which good Sir George most bountifully decorated his doll with: but on surveying our elegant friend, I found out in one moment that I was drest---In me you

saw nothing but the general mode---the dull rule of those who want natural taste;---while Lady Westbury, without deviating from that mode, varied and finished her appearance with a grace peculiar to herself.—Thus, while my maid and milliner would have the credit of my habiliments, all the maids and milliners in town would try in vain to copy that dress, which half the company present would not discover to owe its distinction to the wearer.—Modesty was, however, my best friend.—Her dress would ever be in Lady Westbury the least object of admiration; while in Lady Harington---ah, pauvre miserable !---and thus I consoled myself for having spent a fortune to look like a fashionable fright. ---But heyday ! what an impression am I giving of myself to a stranger---I was a fright only on the comparison, observe: for had you seen what an object poor little wretched Mrs. Clifford had made of herself, you could never have forgotten it.---Mercy on us ! how unconscionably

fine was she!---When the sun shone on the gold of her dress, I really was afraid that, like a burning-glass, it would set the whole 'drawing-room in flames.--- However, the snow so plentifully stored on her head gave one some little hopes of quenching the fire, had such an unlucky accident happened.

Fortune contrived to throw Cecilia in Lady Winchester's way.---Do you not think that haughty peeress will hate Lord Westbury's present wife as heartily as she did his last?---I took notice that she would not lift her eyes even to speak to me, whom she professes to like, lest she should encounter those of the bride.--- Her lovely daughter was gone before we arrived, for she staid not a moment longer than was necessary.---The Duke of Fernham, however, had remained: probably from curiosity to see our Cecilia; for I took notice that he lingered very near us, surveying her whole person with that odious libertine look which ever marks him.---Lady Westbury, who had stood

the gaze of the whole circle, shrunk from the oppressive eye of a profligate individual. I was glad that her Lord was engaged in conversation, and did not observe her visible distress.—Ah! sweet Diana! to pity you, one need only behold the forbidding wretch to whom your parents have given you. To disgust a chaste mind instantaneously, can be the property of vice only: before the understanding has any cause of alarm, the heart acknowledges impulsively its approach; and contracts, with a kind of shudder, shutting itself up at once, like a hedge-hog, if I may be allowed so vulgar a metaphor, and becoming in one moment, cold, rough, and impenetrable.

Women, I believe, excite in the Duke of Fernham only two emotions—desire, or contempt; and I am satisfied at causing only the last, since it saves me from being the object of the first:—yet there are people who call this man handsome and well-bred.

Mrs. Clifford, either not informed of

the coldness between my Lord and his brother, or, perhaps, willing to appear so, importuned me to present her to Lady Westbury, in whose panegyric she was lavish: but I declined the office.

If you take this epistle in as good part as I expect, you may, perhaps, soon hear again from

Yours, most truly,

S. HARINGTON.

LETTER CXXVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

THERE! I thought that you would lay my letter up in lavender.—"Oh! how kind, my dear Lady Harington, was this!" —Well! since you give me such pretty encouragement, I will e'en try to keep my word, and send you another epistle; though you have no notion how languid and tired I am—racketing about, as I do, from morning to night, day after day

too—really, as Sir George says, a woman of fashion had need have a constitution as strong as that of a hackney-coachman to get through her daily duty: then, half of the year we are sick for want of company; and the other half, sick of it.—Yet one would not absolutely wish to get out of the world neither, though thus discontented while in it.

Well! we have all (the brides, I mean; or rather those who pass for such, by having been newly presented) given our assemblies: nor have we omitted to cram every room in each other's house, where we tore our beautiful clothes to shew due courtesy.—Really, our Cecilia is every day more lovely than she was on that preceding: the rich undress which she wore at home put her court habiliments quite out of my head; while the sprightly grace with which she passed from one person to another, rendered even strangers easy.—Yes! she, I plainly see, has found her natural sphere of action, and was out of it till Lord West-

bury married her.---You never recollect that she is not absolutely handsome, after the first look; so much does she gain on you every following moment. I positively should have rivalled her Lord, had I been a man; though, Heaven knows, not very powerfully.---Miss Rivers was exquisitely beautiful: I have observed that she never looks so well as by her sister's side; and, at length, have discovered the reason:---cold as Marianne's heart is, she feels the merit of Lady Westbury, and has a pleasure and pride in seeing her admired.

The Duke of Fernham's house is in a style of almost eastern magnificence; but, I know not how, it looked gloomy, in spite of all the glare of lustres and gilding. His Duchess received her friends in too much state, though the sweetness of her manners a little relieved it.---That fine, that perfect face, how engaging is it ever! What was there wanting to make the sweet Diana irresistible, but happiness? Her beautiful eyes wandered

over every object with a sickly restlessness, which shewed too plainly the absence of her mind---she was so unintentionally, unconsciously lovely, that she appeared like a highly finished picture, only the model of another's taste.---I came in so late that I hoped, without intrusion, to outstay the general company; but as the number of visitors diminished, a few whom I knew well gathered round me; and, as you would not know them better by their real names, you shall have such as will convey their characters: let us call the invidious tatlers---the Countess Vermillion; Miss Simper, her sister; Mrs. Drone; and the honorable Miss Blight, her niece. As it is the fashionable way to compliment one lady at the expence of another, which saves a vast expence of that scarce commodity, wit, thus these ladies began:

"Were you at Lady Westbury's assembly?" cries the Countess, to me.

"Oh! of course," replied I.

"Well! you were quite *astonished*

at the sight of her, no doubt!—Was there ever such a poor rustic!—with as many curls in her hair as my grandmother's picture: and such a load of it!—of an odious copper colour too, and without any powder!—Then her dress! did any creature but herself ever wear a thing so preposterous!"

"What could your Ladyship expect from one whom *nobody knows?*" kindly added Miss Simper. "We should rather commend her modesty in not affecting *ton*."

"The man must be bewitched!" cries pert Miss Blight; "always marrying one can't tell who:—they have ventured to say that *this* wife, too, is a country curate's daughter, who, upon the credit of a little bad French, got into his family as governess; from whence his late lady had the spirit to expel her, on finding her locked up with his *studious* Lordship in the library: (a pretty taste too he must have, *entre nous*, to prefer this damsel to his first wife! who, it cannot be denied,

was handsome as an angel.)—Well; this nymph departed spotless, you may be sure! we all know Lord Westbury's nice morality. After this, she advertised for a housekeeper's place in the country. I know a lady who sent for her:—however, she went to some old bachelor's, in preference; whom she had address enough to inveigle into marrying her, to the disgrace and ruin of his family:—he left her a handsome jointure, they say; and in some of Lord Westbury's curious peregrinations, he met with the Ephesian widow, and snapt at her bait.—When the fool was caught, she threw away her sables: and now you see with what an air she carries it.—What a sumptuous chair and liveries! What diamonds! and what conceit!—my Lord has quarrelled with his brother and all his relations, because they do not own her. Upon my word, I believe his second childhood is commencing already; for, like a picture, his eyes pursue her into every corner of the room, while I

am doubtful whether he would know you from me."

"Pray, Simper," said the croaking Mrs. Drone, "don't you think one of her shoulders higher than the other?"

"Palpably, Madam—in spite of the padding!"

"And she paints," cried Miss Blight, "like the Marquis Tremouille."

"Oh! that 's a trifle," said the Countess; who might well say so, for an obvious reason.

"And stirred her tea," added Miss Blight, "as if it had been a dish of flummery.—He-he-he—every one in their vocation."

"It is a pity," added Mrs. Drone, shrugging up her shoulders with a compassionate air, "that she should not find *one* person of condition to advise her to sit still; and not wander about, under the country notion of *entertaining* her company.—Then, really, her curtsies are too rustic—my Lord *might* have had her

taught to dance before he produced her among *us*."

What think you by this time, dear Mrs. Forrester, of our good-natured quality circle?—I had some difficulty in forbearing to lecture them all, when the Duchess took up the cause; who had listened involuntarily from the moment that Lord Westbury's name had reached her.

"Really, ladies," said she, with her usual sweet consideration, "you must pardon me for concluding that you have seen Lady Westbury with a resolution to dislike her. I have not the honour of her acquaintance, but think too well of her Lord's taste, judgment, and even pride, to suppose that he would have made choice of a bride likely to disgrace either himself or his rank: general report is never to be trusted, for it is a gratification to half the world to depreciate the happy and the fortunate."

Do you think that I could not have kissed the lovely Duchess for thus

generously maintaining the cause of her rival?

"Your opinion," cried I, addressing myself wholly to the Duchess, "is at once liberal and just. I have long known Lady Westbury, and dare pronounce her person, heart, and character, to be alike free from art or blemish;—if self-derived, surely her merit is the more to be admired. The only proof that can be brought of her not being born *among us* (and I cast a contemptuous glance on the scandal mongers), is her modesty; —the singular delicacy of her heart has given to her mind and manners a polish which fashion would vainly imitate. Whenever Lady Westbury deviates from general custom, it is only when she has a consciousness in her own mind of propriety and elegance: and she adorns those dresses by which others would only be adorned.—With regard to the accounts which you, Miss Blight, have perhaps too hastily credited, and too freely reported, be assured that most part

of the tale is entirely false, and the rest shamefully exaggerated. Lord Westbury would never have had occasion to *solicit* his cast-off mistress, as he did this lady, to accept him—that confutes itself. She was the relict of my uncle, Colonel Percival, in whose house she at first resided as my friend and visitor, under the protection of my mother, and never in any humiliating light: nor, had ill-fortune reduced her condition, could any human being have ventured to degrade a nature so noble. Her conduct towards Colonel Percival's relations has numbered them all among her warmest friends; nor would Lord Westbury allow her to retain any thing she owed to that marriage.—When you know her better, ladies, you will, I am persuaded, blush for your inadvertent injustice."

Confused at the consequence, rather than ashamed of the error, the bevy of belles took a hasty leave, and fluttered away together.

The time I thus spoke seemed the only moment in the evening that awakened the soul of the Duchess. The vindication of Lord Westbury's choice was rather an effort of her heart, than judgment; and she reflected upon it afterwards with some confusion.

Not one word more passed upon the subject. Chintz, china, cards, and all the insipid topics that eke out *assembly* conversations, employed us as long as I staid.

The entrance of the Duke chilled the little warmth remaining in his interesting statue. He hovered near her with a troublesome kind of attention; while her sweet eyes, turning ever from him in soft and silent distress, strove in vain to check the tears that would flow into them. The time the odious man griped her hand, seemed an age to her; and his removal to a distant seat, a blessing. I left them, so shocked and chagrined, that I almost doubted whether I

did not hate my own poor good husband, whom I found waiting supper for me very patiently.—Adieu! *this is life!* bless Heaven that you are a rustic, as well as

S. HARINGTON.

LETTER CXXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

REALLY, my dear Amelia, though much better in health, I am by no means equal to all the dissipation you lay to my charge. Lady Harington can afford constitution for a winter in town. I am not attached to that mode of life, nor able, were I so, to pursue it. Lord Westbury owed it to his own rank to introduce me; and the manner was suited to both his fortune and his spirit, which could not brook my having a footman the less before my chair, because I was not

Lord Winchester's heiress. This, however, was the shew of a day. He loves home too well to persuade me to plunge into the same torrent where his happiness has once already been wrecked; and when I see him delighted in the narrow circle of his own house, and the friends whom his social nature attracts thither, what have I to wish?

I remember I mentioned to you my disgust at having encountered Lady Sarah Monro's woman one day in the hall:—not long afterwards that lady sent for her two little cousins to dinner; without shewing the least attention either to my Lord or myself. He was abroad, and not knowing how he would wish to have so delicate a point settled, I ordered the sweet children to be ready to wait on her Ladyship at the hour she named; and leaving a note to inform him of the invitation, and my conduct, I went out to take a ride in Hyde-park.—My Lord came home soon after I left it; and, having perused

my note, drove to his aunt's. That good lady was so little aware of the visit as not to have ordered herself to be denied. She was always, however, fond of her nephew; and soon losing her chilling air, reproached Lord Westbury with reducing his father's sister to stoop to make the overture for a reconciliation, when, in politeness, as well as duty, he ought to have hastened to her. My Lord answered, that had she given him any reason to suppose his visit would have been welcome, either of the motives which she suggested might have ensured it: but that he could not allow himself to be thrown thus at a distance by relations who certainly had no right to decide upon his conduct, of which he would ever be the sole judge.—What, indeed, could he conclude, when she had left a respectful proper appeal to her feelings unnoticed, but that his having simply exercised the right of making himself happy had offended the relation who professed to have his happiness at heart?

The tender love and esteem which he bore his wife, made it out of all question that he should attempt a reconciliation from which she, who had never offended, should be excluded. Neither could he in conscience allow his little girls to be nurtured in prejudices which their innocent natures now knew not; perhaps to the injury of that amiable woman whom he had given them for a mother.—Lady Sarah answered, that he was too tenacious and decisive, since he would not allow her time to consider how far the choice he had made would be justified by the opinion of the public.—Her nephew replied, that it would impeach her own judgment to let it wait on that of the multitude: nor was the respect ever highly valued by us which our friends only bestowed to avoid the charge of singularity. He dwelt on my praises with the warmth of a lover; and, as his aunt is very partial to him, I rather think that she indulged herself with the pleasure of hearing him intreat for a return

of her kindness. She reproached him, I doubt not, with resigning Lady Diana for me: I ever said, that her merits made my faults;---for I am almost certain that the dearest of men hesitated, and was not so clear as before in this part of his recital.—Lady Sarah added, that she still recollected with pleasure those days when I accompanied her nieces to visit her, though little did she then think what made *him* so alert in his attendance; nor had she, during the interval of her absence, been without an opportunity of knowing an uncommon instance of the dignity and integrity of my mind: she finally hinted, that were she not a good deal governed by the will of another, she might not be inexorable,---" though certainly, Edward," she haughtily added, " though Miss Rivers might be a very good young woman, you cannot expect that I should think her a wife for the Earl of Westbury."---What do you think the dear saucy creature replied to this? " That he hoped I might, even in her

Ladyship's opinion, make a very good *mother* for the Earl of Westbury."—Lady Sarah smiled and answered, "*Indeed!*"—He knew, you perceive, as well as myself, his aunt's weak side.—She, after a pause, added, "If *that* should be the case, she must needs say, that rather than have me vexed, she should be persuaded into a visit."—"I shall never have occasion to persuade you into a *second*," cried my Lord.—"Ah, foolish man! so you all say for the first six months," answered the shrewd old lady. "However," continued she, "you had better send the children to dine with us; their visit may more probably bring on a return than any thing I know;" and sagely hinted, that, however he might insist on the right of deciding his *own* fortune if he rather contracted than enlarged it, the least consideration that he could shew for his daughters, would be to allow them to derive those advantages from their other relations, which he might disqualify himself from bestowing. That Sir

James, having no children, was disposed to attach himself to her kindred, no less than to his own; and saw in George a young man much more consistent and prudent than the head of the family, which, as she loved both her nephews, hurt her very sensibly.---My Lord indignantly answered, " that were he not on proper occasions above sacrificing his feelings to his interest, he should be wholly unworthy of the affection she expressed for him.---To differ from his brother in *all* respects, was equally his merit and his pride; since but for the artifices and baseness of that brother, he should never have placed himself in so painful a predicament with the Winchester family; or have almost broken the heart now most nearly allied to his own."--- Love and anger, I doubt not, lighted up every fine feature as he spoke. His aunt desired him to be calm, and allow her to mediate between him and his brother.--- To shew that this must be impossible, he repeated my whole story, from the

hour she knew me in his house; when, at once professing herself convinced of my merit, she promised her nephew to pay me an early visit, and they parted with great cordiality.

And whence arose this sudden conviction of my merit, think you? Why only, my dear, from her finding that *either* brother would have married me: and this, making George a more inexcusable culprit than my Lord (as he was poor, and a younger son), acquitted the latter at once.—Oh! how one despises such worldly dis inctions! such narrow prejudices!

I happened to return in the interim, and hearing that my Lord had forbade the children from attending Lady Sarah, and had left home abruptly, I began to fear that he was gone to visit his aunt, and would quarrel with her.—Yet after his last hint, I was determined never more to name that lady, unless he led to the subject.—What a relief was it then to me to hear him as he came up

stairs, desire that the children might get into the carriage which he had quitted, and drive to Lady Sarah's!---This removed my silent perplexity; and that tender cheerfulness I feel whenever he is ne r me, never was more visible.---His eyes were full of a pleasure which they longed to impart, and he drew me into his apartment.---" Never, Cecilia," cried he, " say that I overlook your slightest wish.---I have taught my aunt to form a juster opinion of your merit, and she will tell you so herself on Thursday." In the sweet emotion of the moment, I threw myself into his arms.---" Really you are in a gracious mood this morning," cried he gaily: " you set so great a value on your kisses, that you gave me not one for your diamonds! but since you are so generous without even a demand, I scorn to be outdone."

Time seemed to stand still, while the dearest of conversations occupied us alike.---Past, present, and future, now appeared to both delightful.---Dinner was

announced before either of us thought of dressing; and resolving to be denied, we gave up the whole day to indolence, and each other. I sat down to table in my habit, with my hair in a glorious disorder; while my love reconciled me to this impropriety by flattery too dear to be forgotten, though too extravagant to bear repetition.

Of all the various advantages which are comprised in the character of Lord Westbury, the one I think most admirable is his temper—that important requisite to matrimonial felicity:—*so* important that were I asked what was the first, I should answer in imitation of the Greek orator —Good temper.—What the second?—Good temper.—What the third?—Good temper. If I may believe those most dear to me, and no other people can properly judge, as only those whom we love can try the temper, I am in that respect not ill-matched to him. Misfortune itself has not soured, but softened mine: yet do I watch myself continually;

lest by any encroachment on his too-indulgent nature, I should give way, unconsciously, to a foible that I may never be able to cure.

This happy day of unreserved confidence and affection, passed in many discussions, communications, and comments: I ran over almost my whole life, concealing only the affecting part of Miss Fermor's story; but as this necessary reserve prevented my giving any reason for her abjuration of the world, he was left in astonishment at such a choice. I observed to him, that the error which I on reflexion most censured in myself, was my consenting to stay one moment in the house with him after I knew my own partiality, and had guessed at his.---This he insists was natural, and not at all reprehensible; the indiscretion of allowing myself wholly to depend on a woman whose character I knew not, was, in his opinion, my greatest fault, as well as misfortune. My desperate resolution to quit the kingdom with her, astonished him. That neither my ec-

centric friend Mrs. Granville, nor myself, should suspect Lady Killarney, appeared to him almost incredible; for it was at the very time I lived in his family, that his intrigue with her broke off, and she married Mr. Fitzmaurice.—"You could not have named her to *one* human being of my acquaintance," added he, "who would not have told you the truth; for she had made herself ridiculous to notoriety: and our correspondence was public as the day."—I answered, that it never was in my nature to hold discussions with domestics, however I might be thrown in their way, and still less likely was I to enquire into the actions of those who employed them.—Nor, in the consciousness of how dear he was to my soul, had I dared to trust my lips to pronounce his name, but when I could not avoid it.

At length we summed up the facts, and agreed, that, in the eye of God, the fault which I imputed to myself might be my greatest, but that a hundred such

would not have half the ill consequences which one single instance of boundless credulity might; since to be nicely cautious concerning the reputation of those with whom we associate, is the only way to secure our own.---This worldly caution often saves the artful of both sexes from all the outward mortifications annexed to guilt, while those less prudent sink under the censure which they hardly know themselves to have incurred. The generous and high spirit of the Count de Sommerive, in venturing to open my eyes as to the misconduct of my companions in France, charmed him. I had some difficulty to persuade him that I liked in the Count only that resemblance to himself, which I perhaps fancied. He saucily shakes his head, and exclaims---"Ah! that Frenchman, that Frenchman, might with better luck have carried off my prize."

And now it suddenly occurred to him, that even my own account would

be less delightful than my letters, where he might

Catch the manners living as they rise.—

I promised to ask you for all that I ever had written to you previous to my introduction to him.—" And why not afterwards?—How did he know but that I might have some agreeable *English* as well as *French* lover;—he should be charmed by comparing my letters with his own recollections, to observe when I had first looked into his heart, and when he had guessed happily at mine."—" Oh! you can't *bear flattery*, not you," replied I, laughing; " but all the high colouring of fancy, the enthusiasm of passion, you could contrive to support, I dare say, without the smallest scruple.---Ah! no, no,—men ought never to know what simpletons love makes of poor women."

However, after all, send me as many letters as you have, for that hint of an *English* lover, disposes me to let him see the whole collection.

We now passed on to his story; but, observe the difference of sex,—the whole was told in two minutes:—" he was a boy in ideas as well as years—fell in love with a pretty girl—would have her, and did." It was only by insensible degrees that I drew from him the little incidents which embellish a tale trifling and insipid enough in itself.

Lord Westbury praised, with a son's partiality, the venerable Dr. Leslie.—" How he resembled my father!" cried I every moment. " I wish that the similitude," returned he, " had run through the family;—and yet I do not,—for even your virtues and graces, my Cecilia, might have been insufficient to make me happy, had they not been comprised in yourself." I shall now new-model my first production, my little romance of Lord Westbury's story, and send it, as I promised, to Lady Harington.

When the children returned, Lady Sarah sent me a card, in which she invited herself to dine with us on Thursday.

As this is (in the affected town phrase) *my day*, I thought that it would be proper to give her an option at least: but my Lord judged otherwise; and that she probably had learnt this already. My heart beat, while her footman exercised his skill upon the knocker.—Ah! thought I, a kind acknowledgement, or none at all! Lord Westbury came hastily from his study, to conduct his aunt up stairs; and I advanced almost to the door to meet her, though too much fluttered to utter a syllable.—"I wish you joy, Lady Westbury," said she, taking my hand, and kindly saluting me, "for you were always deserving of it."—"You more than *wish*, you *give* it, Madam," returned I, in a faltering voice.—"It is useless to make you the same compliment, nephew;—your eyes overflow with delight already."—"To have the merit of my wife acknowledged by those whom I love, is the only happiness which I did not possess in herself," was the tender elegant reply of my Lord.

You will see that all formality was, by this easy and cheerful introduction, entirely waved.---As I knew her boundless tenderness for Louisa and Henrietta, I allowed the dear children to dine with us; and the fondness they shewed towards me, as well as that which their father felt for us all, suffused his good aunt's eyes often with tears.

"I have ventured, my dear," said the kind lady, "to promise a young friend of mine, and yours, to introduce her to you, though you will not know her name when you hear it.---She *could* make a claim in her own right, but she rather chooses to do it in mine."

I was curious to learn who this mysterious visitor might be. Lady Sarah, however, bantered me, and would only say, that the unknown would prove my true and grateful friend.

At an earlier hour than usual, Lady Elizabeth Scott was announced, but I recollected no acquaintance of that name. Before I had time, however, to make

that observation, I saw the Duke of Kingsbury's daughter enter, for whom I had suffered such ignominy and impertinence.—" This young lady, my dear niece," said Lady Sarah (and how assuringly kind was that appellation just then!) " is the unknown friend who has not only been your defender, but admirer." —" I am sure," said Lady Betty, " that I have the greatest reason to be both; and now behold in this lady my guardian angel, though I was once weak and ignorant enough to consider her merely as my persecutor. The avowal of my error is perhaps an unnecessary humiliation: it was punishment enough not to know Lady Westbury's merit. I can only hope that a happiness as perfect as I owe to the dignity of her mind is, as the world asserts, her portion."—" Your Ladyship's wishes are not in vain," returned I; " the generous tenderness of Lord Westbury is the only subject on which the world cannot exaggerate.—But how, by a painful compliance with a severe

duty, have I thus won your regard?"—
"Oh! my history," said Lady Betty,
"is not so long as that of a knight errant; and, if I make the most of my time, I may, perhaps, get through it before the more fashionable set arrive.—It is plain that you never knew Sir James Monro to be my mother's uncle; and when I was so injudiciously turned out of my father's house, I was sent away to his as to a prison. I travelled in the deepest dejection, and under a strict guard; for I well knew that the report of my fault would arrive before me; and I expected only coldness, contempt, and suspicion. My uncle Monro had never softened into a friend; and I had not the honour of knowing Lady Sarah. As I had never been allowed any opportunity of acquiring the manners of the world, or of forming those connections which open and elevate minds well turned and taught, my only resolution was—to yield nothing to harshness, but to wait in silence for an opportunity to follow my own inclina-

tions. How agreeably was I surprised to be welcomed with a mother's kindness by Lady Sarah! who, while she censured my error, was more severe on that of my parents, which she saw had, in a moment, injured my character through life. She soon convinced Sir James that nothing could save it but taking me to Edinburgh; putting confidence in me; and introducing me to a proper circle of society.—If, when we were there, her prudence induced her to keep an eye upon my conduct, it was with such refined delicacy, that I neither felt nor saw it. Lady Sarah soon taught me to blush at the narrowness of my sentiments; but it was only by the enlargement of her own. I spent part of my time in finishing my education, and forming my manners: the rest past happily in elegant society.—This did what solitude and confinement could never have done; and that cherished passion, for which I was lately ready to give up every thing, soon appeared, to my riper judg-

ment, the inexcusable folly of youth and ignorance: nor was I, in a short time, sensible of any emotion at the name of my former—must I say?—*lover*.

"Among the most assiduous of my uncle's visitors, I often saw an officer both of rank and fortune, who soon distinguished me; and as he was every way my equal, Sir James countenanced his addresses. The approbation of my parents was accompanied by that of my heart, and nothing but the mortifying acknowledgement which I judged it right to make, retarded my marriage; when my sordid mean lover, having traced me, with that zeal which as much marks a mercenary as a generous pursuit, found means to address me by letter, in that familiar style which I had once, I blush to own, permitted. Never did I feel so contemptible: my worst enemy could not more have despised me than I did myself. I strove to end, by a cold and grave explanation, all his hopes; but, to complete the baseness of his character,

he then informed Colonel Scott of all that had passed: fortunately I had prevailed on myself to make the painful explanation that very day. The Colonel punished the insolence of the wretch as it deserved, and I heard no more of him.—Within a few months after, I parted with you; and I may say only *through* you I became the happy wife of Colonel Scott. —May I flatter myself that your Ladyship will pardon my intrusion, and this long story? I could not refuse the Colonel, or myself, the pleasure of seeing and admiring Lady Westbury. If it is possible that what I have urged should, in your eyes, have atoned for my error, allow me to hope for a long continuance of that friendship I so much value. Your society I must necessarily lose, as Colonel Scott is appointed governor of Gibraltar, whither I mean to accompany him."

Thus happily ends the story of Lady Betty; and in the pleasure it gave me I lost all recollection of the bitterness of spirit, the complicated sufferings, and hu-

miliations, which I once felt through her means.—Oh! how sweet is it to the soul to become an humble instrument in the hands of Providence to preserve one human being from sin or sorrow!—But to find that very being suddenly sensible of your exertions! to enjoy the luxury of being praised!—this is the only adulation which the heart can receive without a reproof from the understanding.

According to the old saying, honesty, too, you see, is the best policy: for had I not acted thus, I should not have had a friend to confute, to Sir James and his Lady, the artful calumnies of Mr. Clifford: whereas, Lady Betty absolutely disproved some of them, by testifying how honourably I was employed at the very time when I was represented to be the victim of vice.

Lady Sarah soon made up her whist party, and staid most of the evening.—Lady Harington brought my sister with her, who was elegantly dressed, and charmed the whole circle.---See what it

is to have a circle! for I was the very same being, and poor Marianne even handsomer, when not one of these haughty triflers would have thought it worth while to chide her footman if he had thrust his flambeau in our faces. It must, surely, be impossible for pride or vanity ever to predominate in us who so feelingly know to what we must impute the admiration of the world; and how ought we to pity those who are necessarily *born* angels, in inheriting titles and fortune!

If Lord Westbury's daughters are thus misled, I shall have lived for a very little purpose. My mind is not less intent upon their improvement than when it was my sole employ. Ah! is it not indeed even more my duty?—Having observed that they were infected with a childish love of dress, I never allow them to wear a finer frock that usual. It is true that those they always wear are suited to their condition: but of the quality they are no judges, and all variety and gaiety

is wholly abolished. I have often thought that the modern fashion of expecting a governess should teach almost every thing, is one principal reason why modern ladies know hardly any thing. For Lord Westbury's daughters, I therefore only wish to find an English woman elegantly qualified to instruct them in that language; and with a mind duly formed by observations upon life, and wisely subdued by experience. I would have it the sole business of her days to watch over their morals, cultivate their natural tastes, and form their manners. Teach children to reflect, and they will soon know how to *behave*. The great error in modern education is confining the mind to a regular set of lessons and modes, while all the powers of reflection remain unexercised: let it become a *habit* to *think* before the inferior habits of life shall have extinguished emulation, and ranked your protégée among those who are undone by the prodigality of nature or of fortune.

It certainly is very difficult to unite the progress of mental and personal improvements; as children universally incline to one or the other. Louisa now, for instance, would bury herself in a book; and Henrietta's little figure is grace itself at the sound of her dancing master's fiddle: to the first, therefore, I commend her skill in dancing; and to the latter, the application with which she studies. The desire of deserving praise quickens their diligence towards what they do *not* love; while what they do, they will improve in with hardly any effort at all.

The dear girls are attended by the first masters; and it is astonishing to some people why I incur so great an expence for them at so early an age. But I think this the very period of life when they should acquire accomplishments; as the mind is now capable of little more: and thus will their riper years be left for higher studies; on which, if they must have pride and

self-opinion, I would rather wish them to be founded.

Education is the root of almost all the good or evil in this life. How careful then ought those to be who must one day, perhaps, dreadfully account for any misconduct, to watch over the creatures whom they call into existence! and how few, even of the most anxious parents, can fulfil the various duties comprised in that title!—What then must become of such persons as, entering matrimony from venal or sensual motives, abandon their offspring to people often incapable, and almost always negligent; through whom those beings become curses to society, who might, with due care, have been its brightest ornaments? Nay, are not such parents impolitic as well as inattentive?—they would separate the sweets of love from the bitters; nor recollect, that they may sicken at the very richness of the draught.

Seriously speaking, what claim has any woman to the cares or protection of

a husband abroad, who does not study to make his home happy by that most refined proof of affection—a strict performance of those duties which God has made the fruit of our indulgence? Perhaps you will say, that if every one thought thus deeply, few would venture into wedlock. I grant that a number of unhappy marriages would be prevented: those only who are equal to the duties in life which so exquisitely heighten its enjoyments, would then enter the bonds of hymen; but the happiness of such people would insensibly refine and improve society: while their children, rationally educated, would attach themselves only to kindred minds, and thus lengthen the chain of being which reaches to infinitude.—Do we not daily hear parents condemn, with asperity, faults in their children which must from their very nature have originated in their own misconduct? How many willings, too, from witnessing the daily dissensions of their parents, launch into life

with an avowed contempt for an institution by which they hold the title or estate which alone obtains them a hearing?

From this long discussion it is obvious that I have caught the maternal infection from you; and would fain have my Lord's dear children models of perfection. Adieu.

LETTER CXXVIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

YOUR lively answer, my Amelia, most happily contrasted my moralising epistle: but it is not sinking beneath you that shall induce me to become any thing but the creature nature formed me. To understand our own merit, and make the most of it, seems to me the grand secret of life; and those who, not satisfied with their immediate portion, imitate and encroach upon their neighbours,

become at once fatiguing and ridiculous. Were not our tempers various, the world in all its varieties could not supply us pleasures. A beautiful butterfly fluttering through a garden, has, perhaps, more attraction for my eyes than all the splendor of a birthnight. In the smallest of the light wanderer's golden freckles I recognise, and worship the hand by which I was made; and leave it to those who gaze enraptured upon gaudy tissues, or pore over rusty medals, to adore the vanity and frivolity of their fellow-creatures.—I was, you say, born an enthusiast.—Ah! happy fault in my temperament! that rendering it capable of an excess in every pursuit, leaves no possibility of the listlessness by which half of my sex are reduced to court society they cannot but despise.

On Monday I went to Ranelagh, to oblige Lady Harington, who had requested us to meet her at an earlier hour than usual, that she might have the amusement of seeing the crowd assem-

ble. I, you know, am but a rustic; there-fore that I arrived first will, I think, not much surprise my dear rustic correspondent. I found an elegant bouquet, which my Lord had taken the trouble to bring me that morning from Richmond, was falling about the room; and while he held a little chat with Colonel Armstrong, I sat down on the circular seat to adjust it. Lord Westbury was so near me that I never dreamt I should not be sufficiently protected; nor remembered that I was elegantly half drest for a supper, to which our whole party were going at Lady Bloomfield's. —"Will Miss Rivers allow me the honour of assisting her?" said some one, tendering me a few flowers of more exquisite beauty than even those that I was binding up. The voice was familiar to my ear, and raising my eyes, I met—those of Monro! Lord bless me, my dear, what a start I gave! At once I felt disposed to throw all the flowers on the matting and fly to my Lord: but one

moment having shewn me that I ought to get rid of this man before he could notice the impertinence, I answered, after a pause, with sang froid enough, "I do not know you, Sir."—"It is, perhaps, my misfortune," cried he, with a languishing affected air, "to want those graces which make it impossible to forget you—Oh! Miss Rivers, why this chilling manner?"—"I told you, Sir, you had made a mistake—that is not my name."—"By whatever name, Madam, you are called, you surely cannot but recollect in Monro, an admirer—" Indignation would not allow me to hear another word; and stopping him in a concise and contemptuous manner, I replied: "Since I find, Sir, that you are determined to address me, I must take the freedom of telling you, that my recollections are very little to your advantage: had I not *known*, I should not have had such cause to appear to forget, you; and in never hereafter pronouncing your name I shall do you a favour; for I have lately met your

lovely, unfortunate, injured cousin, and having heard her woeful tale, am authorised in despising and shunning you: I have learnt from her, too, all that I owe you on the article of reputation. Have a care, in turn, never to name *me*. The wife of Lord Westbury, Sir, for the last time, addresses you: my honour is now blended with his; and you will know better than to asperse it. You are, I find, rolling in the fortunes of Amelia Fermor: enjoy the good if you can. I will never publish by what means you obtained it: but that is all you must expect from me."—Arising haughtily as I finished this speech, though it was uttered in a low voice that my Lord might not hear me, I, in my flutter, threw all my fine flowers about, and hastily catching the arm of Lord Westbury, turned a disdainful glance upon the monster. I saw that rage and apprehension had almost distorted a set of features which I once thought handsome; and his eyes were fixed on me with a malignity abso-

lutely diabolical. He cannot endure to have his shocking history in my possession; and I am now a little chagrined at having owned my informant. He, no doubt, thought that the dear girl had destroyed herself. Yet how, had my conduct been less decided, should I have been able to avoid a man who, I am sorry to say, mixes in every circle? he was among those who would have found in any other behaviour something for hope and vanity to build on. Then the impertinent familiarity of his address!---No; it was impossible that I could, consistently with my own character, have acted otherwise. The idea of his amiable unfortunate cousin animated my words, and my looks generally keep pace with them.

In the eternal round I presently afterwards met the specious villain: nor could I fail to admire the self-command which guilt can assume. Every feature had recovered its regularity. The smile of delight sat on his deceitful lips; and those insidious eyes wandered with a

soft consciousness over the whole fluttering tribe of belles with whom he was walking. To others, whom he met, he now bowed formally---now nodded gaily ---now half whispered some casual question; then turning away with an air of pique, half undid the thoughtless girl by the mere force of implication. To the men, I took notice, that he was always voluble and loud: to the women, he hardly suffered his voice to exceed a whisper. He could choose his opportunity of treading on the train of a beauty, only to shew with what grace he could apologise: while she, all tremulous with the desire of charming, would pursue him with her eyes, and say a thousand flattering things of him to her companions. In short, I saw, from observing him, that it is only to resolve on being the fashion to become so: and the man of ton has one advantage of the snake which he resembles, in being able to rivet a hundred pair of eyes on him at once.

Lord Westbury pointed out to me this formidable Monro, as a stranger; and gave me his character with as much precision as I could have given it to him, but for Amelia Fermor's sake. He calls him a *male coquette*; "a title," he justly observed, "more odious and contemptible than that of a libertine; since youth, indulgence, and sometimes constitution, may be pleaded for the excesses of the latter; but what shall excuse the depravity of the former? Ambitious only of the reputation of success, he prostitutes his mind to seducing that of the woman most admired, to whose ignorance that such a design is possible he must owe his success.--A male coquette, my Cecilia," continued my Lord, "like the most vile part of the female sex, corrupts the heart which he has not ardour enough to warm; and prepares victims for the passions of others, not his own; whose approaches are made easy by his nominal success. Intrigue thus becomes a trade; and a fine person, with a bound-

less vanity, is the best stock of those who follow it. How many unhappy young creatures do fellows like this rob both of peace and reputation; who, wanting strength of mind to rest wholly on conscious virtue, at length begin to deserve the censure of the world, only because they have been supposed to do so! If," added he with a generous warmth, "I could accuse myself of one such crime against society, I would submit to be banished from it: but, I may say, with truth, as well as satisfaction, that my follies were never methodised into a system, nor my vices the fruit of deliberation. The only human being on whom I ever stooped to form a design, was yourself; and nothing but the situation in which I stood would then have tempted me to a view offensive to every generous feeling. Yet, young as I was, I had found so many *weak* women, to use the mildest term, as to leave my Cecilia the power of convincing me--that a truly noble nature is virtuous from principle in every distress, and

proof even against the tenderest of pleaders---her lover's heart, and her own."—

What says Amelia to *my* Lord Westbury? Ah, mine indeed!---How did my soul dilate as he spoke!---I was alone with him in my heart; and the gay, the spacious room---the gaudy lamps---the brilliant circle---were nothing to me; my admiring eyes were rivetted on his,---those lucid orbs seemed each to me a little world; and I could have fallen at his feet to weep out my rapture. A faint contemptuous laugh obliged me to recollect that I was in public. I saw the persons from whom it proceeded to be Lady Killarney, and Miss Eliza Rivers—So they are good friends again! and *both* I presume deserted by Louvigny.—Companions more suitable cannot be found. I will own that my appearance might well excite a smile in those who live but for appearances; yet did ever Lady Killarney, in her most voluptuous moments, know an enjoyment

like the virtuous one with which my bosom then throbbed?—Ah, no!—we must be perfectly pure of heart to allow the world to witness our most affecting pleasures; and all others seem to demand the darkness which conceals them. I have sometimes thought that had the sun shone for ever, vice must have been unknown;—for light seems the imperceptible presence of the Divinity; and our blushes when we err seem proofs that the mind receives it as such.

We were joined at this moment by the Harringtons, Scotts, and some other friends, among whom the conversation became general and sprightly. I took notice that Lady Killarney haunted us;—she walked while we walked, and when we sat down to tea (which we did in the circle round the fire), she chose the adjoining table.—Lord Westbury, I could observe, did not overlook this; but I never knew him more gay and gallant.—Our neighbours affected to be mighty gay too; and were soon envi-

roned by men of all descriptions. The ladies now and then half-laughed—half-whispered ;—the words " ridiculous," " honeymoon," and some others, were distinctly heard. The horror which will for ever live in my mind of a duel, made me wish myself at home; but as the men were no-way concerned in the impertinence, I comforted myself with thinking that masculine as Lady Killarney naturally was, she could not attack Lord Westbury with sword and pistol.

Tea over, the same persecution ensued.—They followed like our shadows ; till Lady Killarney, very loudly, and insolently, said—" Oh! you know her very well ;—I hired her for my companion when I went to Paris, and turned her away for hypocrisy and affectation." Lord Westbury, releasing my arm, in a moment overtook her :—" Those who, like me, know Lady Killarney," cried he with smothered passion, " will not wonder that she should boast of having ever been acquainted with Lady West-

bury; though many reasons must prevent the vanity from being reciprocal:—let me, however, advise your ladyship to beware how you mention her name;—your history, in your own hand, is in her possession;—many people *may* be found who could make annotations where the text is deficient; and the curious production *may* adorn every Magazine in England, to render you as ridiculous as you already are contemptible.—As to you, Miss Rivers (if indeed you have any right to a name so respectable), I take the liberty to tell you, that your nature is more degenerate than that of your patroness, or you could not have become a mere tool in an infamous project:—be proud of a name that my wife has honourably distinguished, and find that an advantage in England, which you converted into her misfortune in France." My Lord, you see, if once provoked, can be as severe as myself.—But what do you think our insolent peeress answered? "The woman who has been known to

love Lord Westbury, can never be *more* ridiculous; so take your revenge your own way, for I *will* have mine." Lord Westbury gave her a look---good Heavens! how comprehensive a one !---then with an easy air rejoined his company: nor till we got home, did I know what had passed, though curious enough as you may suppose.---What hardness does the female character acquire, if once it breaks through the rule of right !---Accustomed as I have long been to Lady Killarney's odd effrontery, this answer surpassed even my idea of her. Mr. Monro soon afterwards joined her party, and seemed to bow at her shrine the whole evening. He would, methinks, be the lover in the world most fit for her; and she may be able to revenge his barbarity to his poor cousin. I wish them no worse punishment than each other, and afterwards repentance. When I recollect what the tortures of self-reproach must be, I think that almost claims my pity.

This capricious, cruel, bold woman,

is among the many instances of the lasting misery which springs from an erroneous education. She herself seemed to have discovered the cruelty there is in unlimited indulgence: for what but that makes her tyrannise over every one in her circle; fall an easy dupe to every pretended lover; and become a disgrace to society, in which she might have been an ornament? She wants not understanding, but she wants all command of it. We see in her a melancholy instance of the various evils arising from the dominion of the passions; since with beauty, youth, health, title, and fortune, she continually declares that she has never known for a week together even *fictitious* happiness. That restless something, to which virtue herself is not always a stranger, poisons her dear-bought pleasures, and continually punishes her with the idea of the neglect and contempt which she knows she deserves. The hour that brings not amusement to Lady Killarney, brings her torture; for

she dares not commune with her own heart ;—but who can silence that upright monitor ? It speaks as distinctly at a coronation as a funeral.—Ah ! my dear, morally speaking, the wicked are the only objects of our compassion.

I know not whether I mentioned in my last, that Trevilian has been a martyr to the gout, at his house at Richmond.—All the time my Lord could spare, has been spent with him ; and whenever the weather favoured, and I was well enough, I accompanied him. On a day when Lady Sarah knew that he was to go without me, she sent a note, to say that she would dine with me, if she heard that I was to be *alone*.—This stipulation surprised me; yet being at liberty to receive her, even on her own condition, I had only to make the invitation.—Indeed, my dear, though I stay in town and am considered as a fine lady, I am very often to be found alone. Whenever my Lord is absent, I employ myself in settling with the housekeeper and steward all neces-

sary family concerns; for I am aware, that having brought my husband no fortune, I am doubly bound to see that which he inherited well taken care of.--- The domestics profess to like the regularity which I have introduced into the house: it has indeed this consequence, that they have individually a chance of pleasing those who will see them; whereas the upper servants so commonly monopolise the ear of the mistress, that the rest of the family are often severe drudges. Yet do I detest parsimony as much as profusion. It is however certain, that my Lord finds a magical exactness succeed to a kind of universal neglect; and assures me, that, far from costing him any thing, he may afford me a diamond necklace every year, out of the money which I save.

Those people know but little of the ill effects of mismanagement, who conclude that a large fortune can be impaired only by expensive pleasures. I speak within compass, when I aver that half of

those who outlive their estates, are amiable dupes, plundered by every selfish underling: not having courage to examine into past extravagances, nor to curtail the present, they sink, in the merest trifles, sums which would answer the noblest purposes of benevolence. These trifles can only be known to a wife; and those who do not, by a liberal caution, increase in every respect the comforts and diminish the useless expences of home, are married mistresses, with separate interests and selfish views.

When my mind is discharged of these little duties, I sit down to await the return of my Lord; while a sweet consciousness of deserving the tenderness with which I am sure of being rewarded, lighting up every feature, I leave in my closet all lower concerns than love. —Forgive my prolixity on this subject; it is my emulation, my pride, my vanity if you will—a vanity that I should think inexcusable, were my heart not impassioned: but self-love is a faint principle,

when the happiness of another so entirely guides you, that every assiduity seems too little to acquit you to yourself.

The same mode of conduct, in other instances, actuates Lord Westbury; and while we live in habits of boundless confidence and affection, in every instance that is really important, each, by a sense more intuitive than politeness, is silent upon common occurrences too minute or disagreeable to discuss.—I need not observe to you, what a charm and variety this gives to our days.—Politeness is a mere band of society, adopted at once by the feeling and unfeeling; or rather perhaps imposed originally on the last, by the first: but there is a more refined and exquisite decorum existing in some hearts, which is the origin of a thousand nameless delicacies of conduct. —No rule can mark what observation can hardly catch; for it is transient and changeable as dew-drops in the sun; insomuch that we hardly know whether it is impulse or sentiment. This, however,

is the charm, the indescribable charm, which, blending heart with heart, at once keeps alive the desire of pleasing, and every grace conducive to that effect, by always leaving us something to wish--something still to hope.

To return to Lady Sarah, who arrived in the agreeable freedom of an undress; and declaring that she came to fatigue me with her company the *whole day*, begged that we might have it to ourselves. She found an opportunity while the dear girls were gone into their own apartment to take a lesson of dancing, to address me.—The air of irresolution she had often shewed by hemming, and twirling her snuff-box, made it a relief to know what was passing in her mind.

" If I had not the strongest conviction in the world, my dear Lady Westbury, of the sweetness of your disposition, by the boundless tenderness which you shew to the dear children who have left us—insomuch that every one sees they have now just *gained*, rather than lately

lost, a mother—I should still have continued silent on the subject I mean to open my whole mind upon.—My two nephews, my dear, have a mortal difference: the world speaks variously of its cause; but I would know your sentiments on the subject, that *we* may endeavour to conciliate the affair."

I almost started—I almost blushed—in short I was quite at a loss how to reply. To speak the mere truth was condemnation enough for George; and to hold myself up as an arbiter on such an occasion, suited ill with my idea of propriety.

Lady Sarah, during this pause, had examined me attentively, and I fear took my vexation and irresolution for the consciousness of having done wrong.

" I hope," at length I replied, " your Ladyship will never be among those who accuse me of augmenting the difference you mention."

" If such had been my opinion," she answered, " I should not have enough

esteemed you to confer with you upon the matter.—No," continued she in a pausing, dubious tone, "I am *sure* you must be incapable of a mean resentment, even if George had injured you."

"*If* Mr. Clifford had injured me, Madam? He too surely did injure me---too deeply for expiation;---poisoned those days with grief that might have been early crowned with happiness—struck at my constitution, for never can I recover the shock which I owed to him. Ah! how has he curtailed that exquisite felicity of which he could no longer deprive me!---But I have forgiven him;—it is my duty to do so, and to that my inclination ever submits."

"Why this emotion, my dear?---I would not for the world hurt or mortify you. In matters of gallantry, men are hardly ever just; perhaps *never sincere.* Had my Lord been the unsuccessful lover, you might have had just as much reason to complain of him."

"Do you think so, Madam?" returned I, with a look and emphasis worthy such a speech

"Ah, child! you fondly love your husband; and every one will pardon a pre-eminence so natural to your heart. The competition is, however, long since over, and George ready to make every proper concession. For what reason then does his brother retain so inexorable a resentment?"

"I am unable to inform your Ladyship. It is, perhaps, my misfortune that Lord Westbury's feelings clash: and he may love his brother too little, because he loves me too much."

"He cannot love you too much, Cecilia. Have you not been, under God, the blessed means of reclaiming him from a libertine life, which his *brother* was never guilty of?—Nay, do not let me grieve or offend you—I cannot bear your tears.—Come, listen to me quietly, and I will let you know my whole

heart about my family; for it is in your power to contribute to my happiness."

"Ah, that it were as much so as it is my inclination!" sighed I.

"That is very kindly said, my dear.---My brother Westbury, you may perhaps have heard, was the most intractable of men; and I spent my whole youth in perpetual disputes, till by taking a husband, to save myself from his tyranny, I caused a mortal disgust on his part. With Sir James Monro I left England, and resolved never more to return to it. But I know not how---not having any children myself, and finding my brother had been blest with three sons, I insensibly began to attach myself to their welfare, of which our mutual friends continually informed me. When Edward came to the title, I, for the first time, asked Sir James to bring me to England; and I was only hindered from setting out by hearing of Lord Westbury's inconsiderate boyish marriage. Time, however, made me get

over that; and I came first among my relations when I saw you at Lord Westbury's house. Guess whether I was not petrified to find a match of which love had all the honour, already a wretched one; that the husband was only a wedded libertine, and the wife a cold, beautiful, incorrigible coquette—as void of gratitude as of good sense or good breeding: in fact, that they lived so wholly separate, as must ensure to George the title from default of male heirs. After using all my influence to effect a change in their conduct, I grew fairly sick of both, and returned to Scotland without resting any further hope of happiness on my own family. The death of Lady Westbury, the lucky marriage of George, and that afterwards of his brother, were all surprises upon me. Perhaps I did not estimate *you* rightly, till I knew you; but do I not now make you ample amends? As all things have taken this agreeable turn—as George has obtained a fine fortune with his wife—and Lord Westbury

now knows the value of the happiness which his Cecilia has bestowed on him—when I need no longer fear the extinction of a title from whence I derive my own—" She paused; surveying me with an inquisitive eye.—What a fool I must be!—I blushed most intolerably: she smiled significantly, and pursued her subject—"Lord Westbury cherishes an unbrotherly, obstinate spleen, and mars the general harmony."—

Ah! thought I, more than once, during this recital, Mr. George can tell his own tale well. How else, indeed, should I have been a martyr to his artifices?—Finding that I continued silent, the good lady continued:—

"It is to you I have recourse, my dear, to extinguish this improper resentment. You know the blessing which attends the peace-maker. Every wife may do what she will with her husband, if he has sense and good-nature; but your influence is, I believe, unlimited."

"It. is, therefore, more necessary

that I should be guarded in the use of it," replied I.

"In this case it is both a religious and a moral duty: by so doing, you will triumph over him, and give yourself a boundless claim on my regard."

"Your last sentence, Lady Sarah, determines me: but Heaven forbid that I should wish for a moment to *triumph* over the man whom my consenting heart vowed through life to honour and obey! Perhaps it is by never having urged the unlimited influence you impute to me, that I still retain it. I should rejoice to see whatever interferes with your happiness buried in oblivion; but I dare not in conscience, in feeling, exact any thing of my Lord: his heart is the seat of every virtue, and did he once think that he could live on terms with his brother without sacrificing too much, I dare believe his resentment would end. Your near relationship, and partial regard, entitles you, dear Lady Sarah, to speak to him yourself. If you

do it with caution, and with kindness, I am sure that Lord Westbury will weigh well all you say.—I own I think it most likely that he will unbosom himself to me on the occasion; nor need you doubt my concurrence because *I feel it my duty to wait till he does.*"

"My charming niece," she kindly said, pressing my hand very affectionately, "you are born to reform more than one of the family. I am ashamed that you should so delicately teach me the duty of a wife. However, I will avail myself at once of your example and advice, nor take a single step in this business without your concurrence."

Dear good lady! she might have been spared this last assurance, as there was but one step to take, and that she had already resolved on. My lord, as I guessed he would, submitted to me a consideration which so immediately related to myself, and I seconded the wishes of his aunt. Of course we are in train for a reconciliation. How can one see

a worthy woman of her age lamenting the want of comfort in her family, without making an effort over one's self to oblige her? Nevertheless, my forgiveness of Mr. Clifford can only be that of a Christian: where the injury has sunk into the heart, we may indeed *forgive*, but to *forget* is impossible; the author of a misery so exquisite can only be a memento of it, and an unconscious distrust throws us for ever at a distance.

I lament that when I tell you I have seen Mrs. Granville, I should be obliged grievously to disappoint you.—I childishly flattered myself, that the heart which felt my distress would share in my prosperity. Alas! how was I mistaken! the change in my situation had robbed me of my only merit in that lady's eyes —poverty and misfortune. She received me with a vast parade; nor could I once prevail on her, by the most unaffected grateful regard, to lay aside the coldness, haughtiness, and constraint, which she always keeps in reserve for those

who rank above her. She congratulated me on my *good fortune*, in a tone which shewed that she thought it as much beyond my merit as my hopes. I tried to divert the conversation towards Lady Elizabeth Scott, Lady Killarney, any body.---No; she had lost the pride of being my patroness, and had not any pleasure in seeing me independent of that.

I persuaded myself that I had been captious, and that her not returning my visit might be occasioned by illness. Again I called at her door, where I was not admitted, but told *her day*. Even yet I ventured; but the same chilling reception made it a respect due to myself to give up her acquaintance.

Knowing that she had a taste for pictures, my Lord was kind enough to allow me to take from his collection two small, but exquisite, landscapes; one of Claude, and the other of Salvator Rosa. These I presented to Mrs. Granville; and her passion for those admired masters so far conquered her pride, that she deigned to

accept them. I now feel as if we were at liberty to forget each other.

Alas! how useless does she find a noble fortune and benevolent disposition, by sacrificing both to sycophants and dependants! Many people would say, that no such character existed. I sigh to own that I know more than one Mrs. Granville.

Where, where can be the charm in thus looking down on all around you? to become voluntarily a solitary being in creation? Could I obtain superiority enough in society to entitle me to this distinction, gladly would I renounce it, rather than lose the pleasure of being once really beloved. Adieu.

LETTER CXXIX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

THE painful meeting which even you apprehended for me is, my dear, at length over, and we have *patched up* this doughty reconciliation. I am just returned from Lady Sarah's, where I may say with the ancient Roman emperor, "we have *lost* a day."

How odious a part have I been obliged to take in this affair!—to receive a lip-deep acknowledgement from a man to whom I, in the very act of his concession, felt myself both a victim and a dupe! Mr. Clifford has a hard, an incorrigible heart; nor is his present humiliation more than an enforced respect to relations, from whom he yet hopes something. Neither Sir Geoffrey Holbert, nor Lady Sarah Monro, can be persuaded that my

Lord is wholly in fault: and in the vain hope that his brother's declared readiness to forgive, as well as that of his poor wife, was merely the whim of an old woman's brain, Captain Clifford artfully professed himself willing to act according to the wishes of his friends; and thus has been caught in his own snare.

Lord Westbury laid, I may say for the first time, his *commands* on me, to dress with splendor on this occasion; and *alone*, for I knew not whether I ought to desire him to go with me, I drove to Lady Sarah's, who received me in the little 'drawing-room. I learnt from her that my Lord was already in the other; where he had met his brother, rather with formality than friendship, and waved the painful apology, by saying, that it was due to *me*. Hardly had she retired before Mr. Clifford made his appearance: and to fear him is so much the impulse of my nature, that I felt ready to run away. Alas! my dear, I easily discerned that prudential motives, and neither feeling nor conscience,

had induced him to submit to this meeting. He paused — hesitated — trembled. — Judge whether I was more at my ease. I looked impatiently around for those supporting eyes, from whence mine derive every virtue, as well as happiness, but I found them not; and thus thrown back, as it were, upon myself, I resolved, by a powerful effort, to preserve a just superiority. Mr. Clifford addressed me at last; but in a style little corresponding with his looks; for while his language bespoke consciousness and humiliation, his lips quivered with rage, and every moment increased the haughtiness of his air, by lessening its confusion. "He hoped" (and he had *hoped* several times before another word came to his relief) "that I would extend my usual goodness to a man who had once been partially sensible of my charms, and rather conclude that he had been misled, than that he could intend deliberately to injure me." —By whom misled? I *might* have asked, with reason; had I not met him professedly

to conciliate.---I answered in conformity to this, that "I was the more ready to admit his apology, because I would fain hope, that *any* gentleman, much more one dignified with the name of Clifford, would *respect himself* too much to sully, upon mature deliberation, the character of a young woman whom he had reason to think well of;---that it would have been a fault in Miss Rivers to forget what it might be an equal fault in his brother's wife to remember;---in reality, that he might rather be intitled to an acknowledgement than myself, since it was perhaps impossible to know the happiness which now crowned my days but by emerging from a misery like that which had dragged me almost down to the grave; if it were, I wished that it might become his portion." Mr. Clifford bowed; but I thought he looked maliciously. I am every moment tempted to censure myself as judging him with severity: and, notwithstanding all that I have suffered, am ready to reprove an almost *necessary*

distrust. Recollecting myself, I added, that " I could have only one reason for wishing the past might not be wholly forgotten, as I thought perhaps that by keeping it in mind, he would hereafter be more tender of judging from *appearances*; since many women, at the moment we were speaking, must be as much the victims of cruel surmise, as I had once been: in short, that our decisions respecting others ought to be considered as the test of our humanity; and we impeach our own hearts, if we do not doubt as long as doubt is possible."

I will dare to approve this sentiment even upon reflection; though perhaps it was ill-timed, and not very opportunely applied. But I have reason to know Mr. Clifford: too delicate a conduct to such minds only proves that you can bear all they think proper to impose upon you. As I never meant to speak another word on the subject, it became the more necessary to give him at once a fixed opinion, that I could trace

clearly to its origin the very indignity which I might think it wisdom to overlook. The more I observe upon life, the more I see that a polite blindness to the faults of those around us leads them on in errors which a timely hint might have prevented; and that however eligible delicacy may in some instances be, in others it brings virtue and vice too much upon a level.

In the middle rank of society we are linked so much by common interests, that we dare not act up to the sense of integrity existing in our own souls; but when once we are elevated high enough to be candid, our country expects in each individual an example, and has perhaps a right to demand one. To acquiesce, thus circumstanced, through an indolent politeness, with any custom which our reason disapproves, is in effect to abet immorality in inferiors: and notwithstanding a decided mode of thinking and acting will draw on me either the censure of pride or presumption, what my conscience disapproves shall never be

countenanced by my conduct. Happy, indeed, are the great, if only in having so glorious an incentive to goodness, as the flattering conviction of its influence over others! But oh, how far more good and happy are the poor! who, without such an incitement, live and die to God only, and their own consciences: as their dwellings for their children, their hearts seem just large enough to contain the virtues, nor have room for the train of vain and troublesome wishes, which bring more pain than pleasure with them.

A tête-à-tête, in which neither party could say one word that the other heard without apprehension or disgust, could not be of long continuance: and Captain Clifford, therefore, in token of reconciliation, conducted me to the company; where I was presented to Sir Geoffrey Holbert, his daughter, and Sir James Monro (who had hitherto with much address avoided seeing me), together with Sir John and Lady Lisle, who are both, by her marriage, allied to the family.

Of Mrs. Clifford's character little can be said, as she is herself so chary of her words, that one knows not what might be made of them. Fashion is to her a term so decisive, that were we all of the same mind, language and lawswould be useless. Her husband, who has not her excuse of a weak understanding, makes it a chief part of his employment to watch the opening of her lips; and if only one syllable passes thence which he does not approve, he silences her at once, by crying, "My dear, you know nothing of the ton." The long intervals of taciturnity which he thus imposes on her, she spends in minutely examining either your dress or her own. Yet to do her mere justice, she is rustically pretty, very young, very good-natured, and more unpolished than silly. My Lord says, that she is another kind of being since she emerged into high life: vanity is, in his opinion, her obvious characteristic, and coquetry her foible. If he is in the right, what a fine figure will she make when accomplished in those

forms, of which she is at present happily ignorant!

Sir Geoffrey (her father) has, on the contrary, an avowed antipathy to fashion; which indeed he well may, when I recollect the air of antiquity which marks his exterior. His clothes may have been Noah's wedding suit, for any recollection that I have of their fashion. As I, or the jewels which my Lord had made me wear, had the good fortune to strike the knight, I am sorry that the favourable impression was not mutual; especially as Lord Westbury is his darling. I need not add, that *he* knows so well how to enter into the characters of those with whom he mingles as to amuse himself and all around him, without either exposing or adopting the follies which he cannot overlook.

When dinner was announced, Sir Geoffrey was as anxious for a seat by my Lord, as if he had been a fine lady, and jogging his elbow with a most facetious air, cried, "I think I may say, in

the words of Diogenes, how *many* things are there here that I do *not* want!" The perfect self-satisfaction with which our country friend made this blunder produced a laugh that redoubled his efforts to entertain to the utmost a circle so capable of relishing *attic* wit. Most happily for all concerned, the Baronet means to return to Northumberland next week, or we could not escape many a repetition of his stories; for had he treasured every jest, or *no*-jest, published from the creation to this hour, his stock could not last him one single week, if he is as prodigal every day as he was on this. It must be owned, that on the article of wit alone can any body impute that fault to him; for no rigid avaricious guardian ever gave in a more fraudulent account of a mere ward's fortune, than Sir Geoffrey has delivered of his only daughter's, making ample deductions for education which she never had, and physicians whom she never saw. Yet this daughter is his heiress; and he only, by a bad habit, with-

holds from her for a little while a small part of that wealth which in the end will be wholly her own. Mr. Clifford was not so insensible to his interest, as to urge a claim which Sir Geoffrey might have been disgusted with: nor had he any reason; since his lady brought him in her mother's right two thousand a-year in landed estate, and twelve thousand at least in ready money. She will inherit double this fortune whenever her father dies. The husband and wife are alike attached to the pleasures of the world; and both heartily agree in wishing the lectures on economy, which Sir Geoffrey still takes the liberty of treating them with, were confined to that mansion in Northumberland, where he, it seems, speaks on hardly any other subject.

Such, however, is the singular respect which the Baronet has for my Lord, and such the pleasure it gives him to see that his daughter, indiscreet as he thought her marriage, has formed such a family connection, that I shall not be surprised

to find him fixing his residence with his son-in-law, especially as he could live with him *for nothing*.

Sir James Monro is tall, thin, and of a dark complexion, with a countenance something longer than oval: he is quite the man of fashion, but he owes his advantage more to art than nature. Politeness seems to comprehend, in his estimation, all human perfection; while he performs its evolutions with the same precision that a soldier would his exercise; and a stately air, which forms a fine contrast with the nonchalance of modern beaus, for whom, of course, he has an utter contempt. His manner is always cold, and his eye observing. He speaks little; and till he does speak we are almost afraid of conversing before him: but when, after collecting his thoughts, and rivetting the attention of the whole company, he delivers the commonest answer, while we eagerly expect an axiom, the mountain and the mouse will occur to the mind. It is

the ambition of Sir James to be said to possess a fine understanding, and his misfortune to have been born with a common one. As, however, the pride both of his family and country inclines him on all occasions to an important silence, he generally thinks his nod a sufficient decision; and you do not, perhaps, at once discover that a nod is his best.

Add to him the man of the world in Captain Clifford, the man of reason in his brother, the Lisles, the Scotts, and your Cecilia, and our party is before you. ---Sir James had invited some eminent performers, and we had an exquisite little concert. He made this the amusement of the evening, either in compliment to me, as a proficient, or to save Sir Geoffrey from exposing himself by refusing to play. The unfortunate Baronet had the ill luck to lose a whole guinea at Sir James's the other night; a sum which he had never been known to risk before: and his vexation was so loudly expressed,

as to amuse the whole range of card-players. At length, he loudly and pathetically uttered a vow against play, which you could as soon persuade him to break, as you could any real gamester to keep one.

I was sorry to find that music was to be our entertainment, for to harmonise with Mr. Clifford was on my part an effort: and Lord Westbury is always so vain, or so modest (though I will not let him off upon the latter plea you know), that it is impossible to make him breathe one note in a circle: his heart must, indeed, be impassioned and open when it speaks in music. This provokes me the more, as he agrees with me in thinking that feeling, and the exquisite modulation which taste and science give, are the chief charms of vocal music.

I hope before I next write that I shall be able to fix the time when we leave town for York races. I could easily avoid this bustling amusement were I

only to hint that I wish to do so; but would not that be indirectly to limit his pleasures, who so generously and watchfully studies mine? You must not chide me for going further from you: in a few months I shall, perhaps, more want your care, sympathy, and advice. Lady Sarah's conjecture was not without cause. In the delicate state of my health, Lord Westbury dares not cherish so fond a hope; and I am too unwilling that he should be disappointed, to disclose my situation. If, after all, as I sometimes fancy, a little troublesome girl should present herself, unasked, and unwished for, how cool a reception would she find from every body but your

CECILIA WESTBURY!

LETTER CXXX.

FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

DO not suppose that I mean to insult your unfortunate rheumatic arm, when I thus prove mine not to have been rendered useless by the same complaint: but I can quiet the scruples of my wife only by writing to you; for she would deprive herself of my society truly that you may have it! though, were she to be quite sincere, we should find, I fancy, that she is afraid of my incurring the raillery of

"Wilt thou never,
Never be wean'd from caudles and confections?"

"Why, really, I do not think I ever shall," reply I, in the pettish tone of an uxorious husband.—Prythee, Trevilian, follow thy own John-trot pace through life, but why expect me to jog on by thy side in the same methodical manner? And an

admirable authority have you for cynical preachments !—you, who exhausted your constitution before you knew that you had a heart ; and who, professing through life to be only a lover, have been every thing by turns *but* a lover. How it entertains me to hear you so gravely discuss *philosophical happiness !*—Philosophical happiness !—oh, most incongruous junction of words !—Knowest thou not, that the moment we are able to define the cause of happiness the effect is lost to us ?—That bright meteor now shines forth for a moment as the object of our wonder, then retires for an age to give spirit to our wishes. This, at least, is my idea of our sovereign good ; and be assured that the whole sex of women would file off to my side of the question.—" What is the whole sex of women to me ?" I hear you exclaim with the peevishness of fifty-*five* (at least, Frank) and matrimony at once upon you. Hum—why not much, I confess—nor to me neither ; who, treasuring my whole heart in one beloved ob-

ject, and knowing hers to be treasured in me, have not a thought, a wish, that passes beyond herself. The passion which she has inspired, it is true, no longer swims in delirious transports through my brain—no longer bounds with eager throbs through my heart:—there the flame burns with a milder influence, and requires no other fuel than love and merit. Yet, in the evaporation of the smoke of sense, the latent fire, perhaps, has gained strength as well as lustre.

From the time that I was capable of reflection I have been employed in looking both within and without for every source of human felicity, and have traced them all into the passions; which are, according to our own use of them, our greatest evils, or our truest blessings:—if duly regulated and directed aright, they are the life of life—the only inexhaustible variety:—nor can you name one that may not have a noble object; while the whole, as they encircle nature, expand

into benevolence. Yet, as a thousand little springs must flow into one to form a river, so a thousand unknown sensibilities gradually swell into love; and as those rivers roll with increasing force to supply and extend the ocean, love, collecting into itself whatever dignifies human nature, diffuses in turn to the remotest distances and objects the blessings it comprises. Yet, to be without any object in life but love, can only be the dream of a boy or a madman. That passion maintains its influence by being blended with others: nor can you mention an instance where two lovers have not worn out the feeling if they left themselves only that to cherish. Cheerless, however, must be the heart in which it is not the leader!

Having thus, in my own opinion, found out the secret of being happy (a secret almost as vainly sought as the philosopher's stone), you see that I am generous enough to share it with my friends.—Fairly speaking, my dear Frank,

do we not, by considering matrimony as the antidote to enjoyment, make it so? Shew me the man who does not owe his highest sense of pleasure to the difficulty of obtaining the object which he pursues. For this we voluntarily subject ourselves very frequently to the caprices of a mistress: her wish becomes a command—her will our law. Although we may have cause as often to upbraid as to thank her, the very fluctuation of her humour serves to attach us: and he who would blush to be governed by a rational discreet wife, often finds himself subjected to a capricious, faithless mistress. He beholds the fetter with satisfaction, from an idea that he can throw it off at pleasure; but time shews how gross is that mistake. More men are the fools of habit than passion; and, after being slaves all their youth from supposing themselves to be free, they continue so all their age from the painful though secret conviction that the band is too strong to be broken. To corroborate

this assertion, cast your eye over the peerage: the dupes which it immediately presents to you, who have at last married not only their own mistresses, but often those of half the town, would make one blush at sharing a distinction which so little ennobles humanity.

Let us suppose, however, that, convinced of our danger in time, we so far prize our names, fortunes, and constitutions, as to seek to secure them all by choosing a virtuous and suitable companion.---We marry her;---to gain an heir to our estates---a mistress to our families ---a tender friend to share our disquiets, and promote our happiness, which alone can constitute her own.---Nevertheless the poor girl is a *wife;* and when the first fond foolish fit is over, that name incessantly intrudes with her idea.---Far from blending your heart with hers, you are watchfully guarding against the innocent blandishments of her affection, since that may be but a more artful method of encroaching upon the husband's preroga-

tive. By what means can the most amiable woman win upon you, when once you determine to try her actions by that cruel rule? Is she always at home—Well, it is her *duty*. Is she anxiously devoted to you---What is that more than her *duty?* Is she silent when you are out of humour---Is not that too among her severe duties? By such minds her very merits may be converted into faults; and jealousy alone can evince the truth of her tenderness. But what man can endure the jealousy of a *wife?*---Should she have the firmness to expostulate, or the weakness to upbraid, give her at once ample cause for the doubt which she ventures to express; and should she retaliate, divorce her.—Then retail every satirical poet's pitiful jests on the sex to your equally narrow-minded acquaintance, till the bottle becomes your only consolation: and, worn down with intemperance, disease, or years, you reluctantly retire to your lonely home, where no kind sympathising female is anxiously ready

to smooth the comfortless pillow, or chafe those temples where life is giving its last agonising throbs.---Some hireling avaricious nurse is perhaps already despoiling you of the valuables within her reach, as the perquisites of a death-bed; and then sitting down, she snores contentedly by your side: while, without any other wish to live than the unconquerable horror of death, you gasp away unpitied that existence which you have voluntarily debased.---Such, through the force of prejudice, has been the wretched fate of many men, on whom Heaven lavished every means of human felicity. Yet how is the wife to blame?---From the hour you marry, is not her apartment her person---her mind yours?---She must always be seen as she *is*, not luxuriously adorned for some gay private interview.---How can she prevent your palling your own taste, when the banquet is before you?---Believe me, we often make in women the very faults for which we condemn them.---At once more

warm and more cold by nature, we grant too much indulgence at one time to that sex, and too little at another; while, from this inequality, mutual dissatisfaction insensibly springs.

The man who would be happy, must well consider his own heart, and the one to which he binds it; and, above all, he must despise common-place maxims.—Let him not mingle in the first draught, all the balm allotted to sweeten the cup of life, which must ever appeár the more bitter for having once been too rich.—Let him make every fair experiment on the character of the woman of his choice, before he marries her; for such experiments become, after matrimony, treason to love, and the destruction of happiness.—Let him resolve to yield and sway by turns; and if after this he has cause of complaint, let him weigh well whether the fault has not been at last his own, in having more considered the personal beauty of his bride than either her temper or under-

standing.—But if happily he has attended to these important points, and can remember his own part of the compact, while claiming the performance of hers, matrimony indeed becomes happiness, and cements mutual virtue.

How useless to you and to me (lucky fellows as we are!) is this dissertation on domestic felicity!——Cecilia, who has been perusing it over my shoulder, bids me add one trifling but important observation on her part, which may be of advantage to us both:—"that we ought to be very frugal in the use of that treasure which we are obliged to spend a little of every day of our lives." I am afraid that I shall not be much the better for this sage admonition—Shall you?

WESTBURY.

LETTER CXXXI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

I HAVE at length, my dear, recovered my voice, and am no longer prohibited from using my fingers. I was released from my own apartment yesterday, and went for air to the Park. In my way thither I necessarily passed the Duke of Fernham's door, which closed at that moment on a woman, who caught hold of the iron rails to save herself from falling. The faded remnants of gentility which were visible in her dress and manner excited my attention; while hers was wholly centered in her own misfortunes. One moment she raised her eyes with supplicatory anguish to heaven; and the next, turned them with the indignant sense of undeserved insult on the Duke's house, whence

a powdered train of insolent domestics surveyed her, and repaid her looks with all the mortifying ease of licensed vulgarity. As my chair passed on the pavement, I heard her (the glass being down), repeat to herself, in a low and moving tone, "What *will* become of you? Dear infants! have you yet more to suffer?"—Struck with this apostrophe, I was upon the point of stopping; when suddenly recollecting the impropriety of addressing a person thus turned from the door of a nobleman, I repressed the impulse of humanity—the chair, the livery, would certainly be known. I wished myself Cecilia Rivers again for one moment, and lamented the gaudy distinctions by which I held it necessary to be controlled. Any possibility of assisting the poor woman was by this time totally gone: I had lost sight both of her and the house; and though I stopt the chair and described her accurately to one of the blockheads who were parading before me, he came back with an

assurance that she must have turned round some corner, as he could not find her. I severely reproached myself for having sacrificed to the punctilio of rank some destitute unfortunate family. The poor creature had seemed to feel all the consciousness of unmerited misery, and my heart acknowledged her claim upon it. I could not forgive myself the whole day. I, who am hardly proof against the supplications of those whom I doubt, had suffered a child of misfortune to escape me, who had not, perhaps, courage to solicit---who, born and bred above it, expired in silent misery! My lonely dinner (for my Lord was with Trevilian at Richmond) was spoiled by these reflections. In the evening I had promised to attend Lady Sarah Monro, whose solicitude during my indisposition demanded my first visit; and, however unfit for company, I resolved to go, as on that sole condition my Lord had left me; nor would I have him think that I delude him even into his pleasures, lest it

should induce him to constrain himself on future occasions. I once more, therefore, got into the chair; when, lo! as it crossed the Park, I cast my eye on the very woman, seated in an obscure nook. —"Ah, there she is!" cried I in a transport.—"Did your Ladyship speak?" inquired the chairmen.—"Yes, yes, open the door—open, open," cried I, with an impatience which they could not possibly account for. Unwilling to confuse the unfortunate stranger with affected consequence, and not being very remarkable in my dress, which was the close one of an invalid, I bade the servants remain at some distance, and sat down on the bench which she occupied. She started from a profound reverie, and returning the slight compliment usual on such occasions, respectfully rose to quit the seat to me. I was never more embarrassed. Fearful of abruptly touching upon the cause of my coming there, I, with hesitation, assured her "that I would go if I disturbed her."—She sighed, glanced

her eye over my dress, and then surveying her own with sadness rather than mortification, curtsied with a polite humility, and took her place at the extremity of the bench. I now gathered courage to approach her:—"You will pardon, I hope, Madam," said I, with a tremulous voice, "the address of a person who is incapable of impertinence or curiosity on any occasion, much less in the present instance. I happened this morning to witness the distress of your mind:—If it is in the power of one blest with fortune, and inclination, to relieve it, speak; if not, pardon the liberty which had such a motive, and accept, with my prayers, my compassion."—Were I to live whole ages I should never forget the emotions which chased each other from her face while I spoke. Surprise, admiration, a poignancy of grief mingled with a thousand watery gleams of extatic emotion, lighted up a countenance whence beauty seemed but lately vanished.—"Who are you?"

returned she, after a pause—" the blessed minister of a benignant God! sent by him in this perilous hour to snatch me from despair?---Ah! who but himself could impower you to judge of this heart; or give you to read in it the end of all my afflictions!"—Thunder-struck in my turn with her wild address, I concluded that I had mistaken madness for misery; and casting my eyes anxiously towards the servants, regretted that my delicacy had kept them out of hearing.—" Hope better things, Madam," returned I, in the humblest, mildest tone which fear could dictate: " I have known sorrow myself, and have learnt to understand it by a look."—" Oh, blessed image of the Author of all good!" exclaimed she, bursting into a passion of tears: " how ought I to reverence both him and you! You see before you, Madam, the veriest wretch in the creation :—one whose youth has been visited with every evil that can torture the longest period of existence; and who,

unable to endure her fate, had torn herself for ever from her very soul, with the fixed resolution of ending her days. "Yes," added she, in a tone which thrilled through my heart, "I have left two lovely children perishing of famine.—Ah, God! could a mother behold them expire under such a calamity?"—Do you think it possible that I should constrain my tears at such language?—Some low-bred people, struck with the contrariety of our figures, and urged by that petty curiosity which actuates the vulgar of all degrees, approached us, to discover the cause of our agitation. I beckoned a footman, and bidding him wait on this lady till he could put her into a chair, I hastened to my own, which I ordered to return home immediately, and sent the other servant with an excuse to my Lord's aunt.---The poor unfortunate was no sooner ushered into a parlour than she fell into strong hysterics. Mrs. Ellison's care having revived her, she turned to me and faintly said—"It is *want*,

Madam, which occasions this suffering; I have not tasted food since yesterday noon."—"Fly, Ellison," cried I; and to say truth the good creature did not want the command, for she set herself, and every one around, in motion at the first word. Twenty little things were brought in a moment; when dipping some Naples biscuits in wine, I offered them to the famished stranger: but hardly had she swallowed enough to recruit her exhausted frame, when, seizing a variety of cakes, she started wildly up, crying—"My babes! my precious babes! their wants are even greater than mine, for want is to them a novelty!" Resolved to form a true judgement of her situation, I thought it right to accompany her, and bade the man fetch a hackney-coach. Of course I put on a large cloak and my country bonnet, after which I stepped into it with my protegée.—Heaven knows whereabouts she lodged! I think she said something of the Seven Dials; but surely in the purlieus of misery, if I

may judge from the appearance of the streets. After turning short through a multitude of bye-lanes, we stopt at the door of a paltry house, from whence bolted forth a fiery-faced woman, with arms at least as large as my waist: their size was, perhaps, rendered more conspicuous by her terrific motions with them.—"Oh, oh!" cried she, "long-looked-for is come at last! Why, what the devil did the woman mean by locking up those two brats the whole day to squall and disturb all my lodgers?—telling me of your *Dukes* and your *Baronights!*—for my part, I thought as you was out of your mind, and sent for overseer Hopkins to order the children into the workhouse; but he says as how they do n't belong to this here parish, and he'll see them at the devil before he 'll maintain a beggar's brat more than his own." My trembling companion, who was nearest to the door, having by this time alighted, her fierce landlady caught a glimpse of me, which brought her an octave lower in a mo-

ment.—" Dear heart alive, Mrs. Montague," cried she, "why had you not told a-body that my Lady Duchess was along wi' you? Ah! I thought Sir could never hold out!—What! and I warrant you brought all them there cakes for little masters? Ah, poor dear babies, they wants them bad enough!—Take care, Madam, of your beautiful *gownd*.—To be sure my lodgers keeps this here staircase in a mucky pickle."—This eloquent harangue she delivered while puffing after us up two pair of stairs; while as we passed each door, its meagre dirty tenant held it ajar to peep at me. Mrs. Montague, in her agitation, now broke the key in the lock of her room.—" Why, what the devil shall we do now?" bawled out the terrific landlady, resuming all her tremendous vulgarity:—" Hold your tongues, brats, there 's no hearing one's own ears for you."—" Break the door open," cried I.—"Ay, marry, that 's easily said," returned she; " but who 's to pay for mending it?"—" *I* will."—" Well then, Suk, run to neighbour Jones, bid

him come this minute, and break open this here door; my Lady says as how she will pay him."—"But can I wait while my children are starving?" cried Mrs. Montague; and applying her little strength to the door, it proved too crazy to resist even that little. The unfortunate mother now flew towards her babes, and, clasping them alternately to her bosom, bathed them in tears of mingled joy and sorrow. The landlady in the interim employed herself in examining our provender, and tasting every thing which she opened. At length, having sagely observed, that "crying would not fill their bellies," she offered the poor children some fine cakes, which they rejected, though their eyes were rivetted on them with the wildness of want. "Here, Bob, take this," cried the busy landlady, offering him a macaroon—"Ned, here's a nice cake;" still taking toll of whatever passed through her fingers.—"Why, what's the boy turned fool? why don't you take it,

sirrah ?"—"Alas ! Madam," said Mrs. Montague, "they have lived so long on bread and water that the poor babes have forgotten all other food ! Dear Mrs. Hicks, get them a piece of bread."—"Ay, marry will I," cried the softened dame, gathering into her apron all our useless cakes, which she had the modesty to carry off.

I now had leisure to consider the little sufferers : the elder boy was three years old, and the other about half that age. Their careful mother had, when she left them, tied each child fast to a bed-post, so that they could neither injure each other nor themselves. Not all the penury visible in their garb could diminish their beauty. The elder had a rich vandyke head of brown hair ; while the fair locks of the youngest flowed in long curls, like our Louisa's. They both hung with fond imperfect moans on their drooping mother, and twined their little arms round each other's necks, as if they remembered how vainly

they had attempted all day to do so.—The dry bread appeared to them a feast, and water a cordial. After several hints we got rid of the landlady, but not till I had resolved to get rid of a bottle of sack which Ellison had prudently put into the basket.

I then told Mrs. Montague that I must refer all future plans to the future, and content myself with removing her immediately from this scene of wretchedness. She then was obliged to own that she was confined to it by her debts. I almost trembled to inquire into their amount: but judge of my surprise when she assured me that three guineas would satisfy all she owed in that neighbourhood.—"*Three guineas!*" cried I; "is it possible that any human being should be undone for the want of three guineas?"—"As easily, Madam," returned she, "as three thousand. The degrees of misery are various, and its sufferings infinite: nor can the lowest be even surmised but by wretches like

me, whose hearts have been pinched to the very core. Your absolute existence then depends upon that credit which the smallest symptom of impatience at the grossest insults would induce the creditor to withdraw; who, conscious of his own vulgar importance, thinks that the full discussion of all your affairs is the least recompence due to him for his complaisance; and with these he generally entertains the first ready-money customer. To those born in a low sphere this is sufficiently shocking; but if your nature or education is unhappily superior, the whole vulgar world form a combination against you, and I scarcely ever knew a common person who did not delight in multiplying indignities on the *poor gentlewoman*, who shall attempt either to conceal her poverty, or to bear it without murmuring." I asked Mrs. Montague if she had sold all her clothes?—She replied, "that they were all lodged long since (as well as many others now for ever use-

less) with a pawnbroker in the neighbourhood." I gave her ten guineas, and intreated her to be quick in getting her little arrangements made, as I was fearful of alarming my husband by an excursion and stay so unusual; nor did I wish her other creditors to learn that she had found a friend, till we had considered how they might be managed.—"God for ever bless you, my best benefactress!" cried she, in an extacy—"my visible providence! and if the tears of the mother, the prayers of the fatherless, do indeed find favour in the sight of Heaven, you *will* be blessed beyond comparison."

The cold sentiment of charity which had at first impelled my conduct, was now warmed into sympathy. Her voice had the energy of an elevated mind, her features the stamp of an honest one. Every thing which I had observed witnessed alike her sincerity and her misfortunes; and most devoutly did I thank Him who gave me resolution to inquire into both.—I thought her an age absent (though I be-

lieve she made all possible haste), for the day closed, and I knew that my Lord, if he should return, would become uneasy. At length Mrs. Montague came back laden with bundles, and followed by a boy carrying more. "What!" cried I, "have you recovered a whole wardrobe for a few guineas?"---"Yes, Madam," said she, "with half of your benefaction. Alas! you know not the severe terms on which these kind of people supply your necessities. When, by the frequency of your visits, and the gradual offer of those valuables which you must want, they guess that you are never likely to reclaim the pledges, they lend you less and less on every thing; since to value property is beyond the reach of law: and the saying 'that the poor shall be poorer,' is verified by every pawnbroker in London every hour of the day."

Alas! my dear, how ignorant are those often of misery who presume to call themselves wretched! of patience and fortitude, who fancy themselves

wise! What do you or I know of these heart-piercing, soul-humbling, calamities!—The poor woman tendered to me the remaining money; but on my urging her to own whether she had recovered every thing, she hesitated, sighed, and faintly blushing, said—"Methinks I would yet have my husband's picture;—the gold setting I have no wish for, but I would fain preserve all now left of a face so dear to me. I did not venture to redeem that, lest you should think me vain or extravagant."

The landlady assiduously dressed the little babes in their recovered garments, and as soon as their mother returned we set off for home. The tender impatience and anxiety with which my Lord greeted me, affected Mrs. Montague. "Ah! Madam," cried she, "my prayers are needless! Heaven has already given to you a lot worthy your benignant nature!" My Lord stared both at her dress and address, but taking her hand he politely gave her the gene-

rous welcome which ever follows my eye.---Her heart teemed with a sorrowful tale, which I shall not fail to give you when I have recovered the numbness which my fingers feel with writing this everlasting letter. Yours, &c.

LETTER CXXXII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Mrs. Montague's story as told to me.

FROM the deplorable situation in which your Ladyship found me, who could have guessed that I was born to all the advantages (rank excepted) which can elevate humanity? My father was that Mr. Pennington whose various improvements in mechanics made the name first known. Endowed with a singular turn, and left a widower while yet young, with only myself to provide for, he consumed, in a number of ingenious experi-

ments, a considerable fortune. Convinced, however, that by perfecting his plans he must soon acquire an immense income, he set no bounds to his expences, and gave way to the pride and pleasure of success. A fever at this juncture seized him, and soon deprived him of all hope of seeing his great designs carried into execution. His younger brother, who had alway's hitherto derided his projects, had at once become fully sensible of their value; and to him my father committed a certain fortune in his models, and an only daughter, whom he requested my uncle to rank among his own, and endow with a fourth part of the increasing income which must necessarily arise to himself. My uncle faithfully promised all that was required of him, and three days afterwards I was left at his mercy and that of the world. Too young to judge of my irreparable loss, I was much delighted to be with my two cousins. It is true that, as I grew up, I was continually reminded how little

I had to depend upon, except that beauty on which our flattering visitors complimented me hourly: nor did my aunt fail to hint how careful I ought to be to preserve or improve it. Unconscious of any claim to share the wealth in which my relations abounded, I lived on to the age of sixteen, the grateful creature of my uncle's bounty. It happened at that period, that an officer who had been my godfather returned from abroad; and observing how I was treated, he most injudiciously informed me of the verbal compact between my father and uncle, at which he had been present.—Perhaps he reproached my uncle with its breach, for I never more was suffered to see him.

The visible distinction made in attendance, dress, and respect, between my cousins and myself, had not seemed a hardship till this information unfortunately reached me; but from that moment every thing appeared in a new light. I regarded my uncle's injustice and meanness with contempt; the affect-

ed superiority of his daughters with disgust. A weak passion for the splendour which I rather witnessed than enjoyed, now daily more and more insinuated itself into my heart. I had never once known my cousins preferred to myself for any natural endowment, yet I every hour felt that all those endowments must for ever shrink under the accidental one of wealth. Even the flattery bestowed upon my beauty became displeasing, by the air of superiority I now could often discern in those who offered it; and all my hopes finally rested upon captivating some man rich enough to place me on a level with my ungenerous relations, whom I could neither love, nor dared reproach. Had my cousins been allowed wholly to dictate, I should have been buried in obscurity; but as their mother judiciously thought that they had charms enough locked up in their father's coffers, she did not deny me the pleasures of the world; nay, she was even generous enough to adorn me with all the finery

which her own daughters happened to reject, and a wardrobe thus obtained, was always enough to enable me to appear with elegance. As the difference of our fortunes was not written on our faces, I was sometimes guilty of attracting that attention which my cousins thought only due to themselves: but the heiresses were soon known for such, which rectified the error in a moment, and reduced me at once to the humble companion.

Although my mind had never been cultivated, it was naturally delicate, and soon formed vain visions of love and happiness, wholly incompatible with a mercenary marriage. I now even trembled at the mere idea of pleasing, for I well knew, that a lover of fortune would engage my whole family in his cause, and my refusal must inevitably leave me without a friend or a home. Thus reflecting, hoping, fearing, I was drest, exhibited, admired, and forgotten: for the fortune of a woman is more easily

made in a novel than in the world. Nor did my cousins deny themselves the additional pleasure of daily deriding the *poor beauty*, as they usually called me.

The death of my uncle was soon followed by that of his elder daughter; and as the surviving young lady inherited the first fortune in the kingdom, her hand became extremely sought. A complaint which was constitutional with my aunt, obliged her to visit Bath, whither she carried me, as well as her daughter. Here I was converted entirely into her nurse and companion, her own daughter liking neither office, nor choosing any longer to appear with me in public. Judge of the melancholy reflexions which now occupied my hours. I beheld the only person who was disposed to afford me even an asylum, on the point of leaving me exposed to the various attacks of those elegant savages who lie in wait for the human wrecks of fortune, when providence was pleased to rescue my soul from shame, by an event

which led me to penury, and a sorrow worse than death itself.

Among the admirers of my cousin, I frequently saw a young officer, who awakened a thousand fears in her aspiring mother's bosom. Captain Montague was distinguished for personal advantages, graceful manners, and a refinement of mind which is not common in his sex. Alas! these advantages were, as I was continually told, counterbalanced by the lightness of his morals. Launched into the world under the cruel disadvantage of being the son of a celebrated gamester, it was generally believed that he had been trained to the worthless profession, in the persuasion that if his beauty did not engage some woman of fortune, his skill might supply to him a resource. I heard this report every day, with either the augmentations of the envious, or the palliations of the liberal. Beauty and poverty had long been to me associated ideas, and I felt much for a situation which so frequently

reminded me of my own. I gazed on the young officer's fine features with a melancholy pleasure, and it was a long time before I discovered that I never became weary of this employment. By degrees I penetrated into Mr. Montague's character. I saw that he was more thoughtless than immoral, and often led into error by those very qualities which stimulate minds better instructed to virtue. Pride made him desire that affluence, which sensibility would have robbed him of the power to enjoy. Nay, his elegant gallantry was but the soft exuberance of wit, and sweetness of temper; and much too general to flatter the mistress whom he had chosen. In effect, my cousin just allowed him hope enough to delude him into desiring the name of her lover, because she found him among the few of her conquests that excited envy.

A considerable part of my cousin's fortune being dependent upon her mother's will, Captain Montague (who flat-

tered himself that he should be able to appropriate the whole, whenever he might be disposed to urge his suit) thought it not amiss to establish himself in the old lady's favour. My aunt, however, had an insuperable aversion to the sight of an untitled officer, and therefore often left me to receive the visit which he meant for her. The depression of my character was not likely to prepossess a gay young man in my favour; but the sensibility of his disposition made him allow much for my situation, and the soft respect with which he always addressed me, soon awakened in my heart the deepest partiality. His character gradually unfolded with that candour which forms the most touching charm of love or friendship. I discovered that he did not regard my cousin with an affection such as I should require, and my mind dared insensibly to assert that superiority which it naturally held over hers. A thousand nameless proofs persuaded me that Captain Montague per-

ceived it. I no longer envied her the manifold advantages of which she had robbed me, save that only one of enriching desert; and I loved Mr. Montague well enough to wish him success. Persuaded, however, that his mistress had not sensibility to return a violent passion, I reconciled myself to hoping that she might not be able to inspire one.

Captain Montague soon discovered that I had adopted his views, and was anxiously trying to prepossess my aunt in his favour; insomuch that the old lady received him sometimes with tolerable graciousness. During these visits, I plainly perceived that he had been ruined by an erroneous education, and I thought it meritorious to attempt reforming him. Every hour of my life was employed in concerting plans for this purpose; and the animated desire refined my own nature, while the disinterested air of my advice gave it efficacy, and Mr. Montague laid at my feet the heart which I had struggled to amend.---A

painful inestimable gift!---He now assiduously sought in turn to find me; and I often was obliged to remonstrate on the folly of cherishing a passion which, however honourable, could only destroy the peace of both. I refused to hear a word of love from him; but not having resolution to abridge myself of the rights of friendship, I saw and conversed with him continually. He gaily termed me his confessor, and under that name engaged me in all his concerns, and invested me with a power of deciding on them.---Alas! he soon and insensibly became the sole object of my cares, my hopes, my wishes.---He was the first human being who had taught my heart to know the sweets of its own affections, and with all the claims of a lover he united those which spring from every tender tie of nature.

In this interval the Duke of Fernham (then Marquis of Beverley) bowed at the shrine of my cousin---Her immense fortune was supposed to be her first charm in his eyes, and the high rank

to which he was born certainly was in hers his only distinction. My aunt however acceded to his proposals, and all other lovers were obliged to retreat. In the general banishment I could not except Mr. Montague, who would I well knew be esteemed a more improper lover for me than my cousin. But, alas! till his visits were withdrawn I knew not how essential they were become to my happiness. In the gay routine of a Bath life hardly had a single morning passed, much less a day, without my seeing him: but now we were returned to London, tedious weeks elapsed during which Captain Montague hardly cast a glance on me; and we never exchanged a word. He found means to write it is true, but letters appeared to both an insipid and dangerous substitute for frankness and affection. I now feelingly distinguished the difference between grandeur and felicity: since I was able to regard with indifference, nay almost with contempt, the splendid preparations which were making for the

marriage of my cousin with the Marquis.---Alas! they were not sufficient to satisfy even *her* weak, vain heart; which, without any absolute bias of its own, knew not how to pursue the bias of any other human being.---I have followed her from one public place to another, and another, where her only object was to display her diamonds and her lover, and then have seen her, on returning home, so hurt at some involuntary triumph of the belle of the evening, as to quarrel with the last without cause, and tear off the first with tears. In these moments I was often the sufferer, and the Marquis sometimes disputed the justice of his mistress's decisions with a warmth which awakened my gratitude. As he was Colonel of the regiment in which Mr. Montague served, I thought it possible that I might win his esteem, and engage him to promote my lover;---when, sad omen of all my misfortunes! I soon observed that the Marquis affected to drop in at our house during hours at which he knew my

cousin to be dressing, and my aunt at prayers. The terms he was upon rendered his particular enquiry for either unnecessary; and the servants shewed him into the room in which I worked: for it had long been among my duties to receive all the visitors whom my relations thought tedious or intrusive.---If he found me alone, he affected to rally my taste for solitude, and under that air of gaiety sheltered a thousand idle and impertinent freedoms, which every day increased, and which neither resentment nor coldness could save me from.---I soon conceived an inexpressible disgust towards him, which nothing but his former appearance of generosity had averted; for there was a nameless libertinism in his manners which a delicate nature ever shrinks from. I reflected with terror on my present situation, while thus insensibly depriving my cousin of a lover whom I never dared accept, nor should be pardoned for attracting. At intervals I resolved to tell all to my aunt; but on recon-

sidering Lord Beverley's conduct, I found that, although there was an unequivocal freedom in his manners, I could not urge a single sentence which he had ever pronounced that was inconsistent with his situation in regard to my cousin: convinced that if I spoke under these circumstances I should only incur a severe rebuke for my vanity, I plainly perceived that in whatever way his despicable inclination transpired, I should infallibly become its victim; since my cousin would naturally much rather choose to question my veracity than that of the man whom she was on the point of marrying: and I had heard him a hundred times assert, that every kind of artifice was allowable in love.---Perhaps this mode of reasoning was enforced by the bias of my heart, for Mr. Montague, who well knew the odious life I led, though unacquainted with this silent embarrassment, urged me every day to put myself under his protection, and fly to Scotland. I was but too much disposed to listen

to him; for the Marquis, by means of some treacherous servant, now got letters regularly conveyed to my toilette, which, with an infamous artifice wholly his own, he always wrote in the style of a lover who was indulged with an improper correspondence; and I knew that should any one of the epistles be found, he would not want the confirming attestation of his mean agent.—Surely if ever young creature had an excuse for a mad marriage it was myself!—The Marquis having failed to seduce, though he continually alarmed me, gave me daily apprehensions that he would himself contrive to publish his own attacks, as if they had been induced by my conduct; by which means he might drive me with disgrace from the only house I could call my home: this house I at length therefore resolved to quit with the chosen of my heart.—Captain Montague carried me to Scotland in the most hurrying manner, though we had no one to fear; for, alas! so little was I beloved, that I might have

married a cobler, without dreading the interference of any friend or relation.

The forms of the church there sanctified a love as pure as ever led two mortals to the altar; and day followed day in a delirium of happiness.---While I saw him whom alone I adored so partial to my merits, nay even to my foibles, what had I to desire?---I, who had never been the object of free, of ardent affection in any human being---who had never felt he genial embrace of a mother---who had never known the blind but cherishing tndness of even a nurse? Cast out into creation to be turned aside at the pleasure of every passer-by, I had frequently been driven with a rebuke from one person, to meet a harsher rebuff from another; and even then was obliged to suppress the proud swellings of a wounded heart, lest a general chastisement should follow. Having thus been the victim of caprice and disappointment from my very birth, a melancholy languor had diffused itself through my cha-

racter, which the glow of love alone could dispel.---Gracious Heaven ! how exquisite was the transition, when, escaping from an odious home, I gave myself before God and man to the lover whom I had chosen from the whole world as the guide, the director, the partner of my days !---I felt like one who, born in blindness, had been blest at the moment when every power and perception was matured, with that sense which taught him the value of every other.

The splendid marriage of my cousin which soon followed---the death of her mother, with that of the Duke of Fernham, which elevated her to every height below royal---made little impression on my mind, except as enhancements of my own felicity.---She, would I cry, ah! what has she done ?---purchased with a princely fortune a vain, penurious, selfish tyrant, whose title alone is desirable: soon, oppressed with every want of the heart, she will look around to learn what the charm is which sweetens and exalts society ; she will

too late find it to be love—love, which ennobles every rank, and endears every toil.— She will no longer look down with a haughty coldness on her humble cousin, but rather she will sighing ask what right I had to more happiness than herself.—

Oh vain dream of inexperience and an inflamed imagination!—this boasted period of unchastised delight was already over; and Mr. Montague's deranged finances obliged us to plunge at once into the anxieties of life.—He addressed to his father the news of his marriage, and found an answer at his lodgings in London on our return thither. It informed him that nature had given him a person, and his parents had given him an education, which would have ensured to him a splendid fortune, had he been commonly prudent: but since, on the contrary, he had made choice of a beggar, he must make the best of a lot which his father would no further interfere in.—After several acrimonious sentences, that gentle-

man concluded with suggesting that there was one chance yet left for us both;---nor need we ever be poor while either continued handsome. The base worldliness of this idea, added to the unprincipled turn of the whole letter, harrowed up my very nature. The horror and aversion I conceived for the writer never abated;---no, not even at this juncture, reduced to want, to beggary, almost to death, could I resolve to supplicate relief from him who was capable of such an insinuation.---The first sentiment of displeasure which I ever felt towards Mr. Montague was on seeing him coldly fold up this letter; and, without testifying either disgust or surprise, he said that he expected nothing better: then smiling, added, that he was not quite so hopeless as to take his father's advice.---He retired to dress, and left me to sorrowful though late reflexion. The profound silence which he preserved concerning our future prospects surprised and hurt me: but I was young, timid,

and tender; nor dared I venture to ask that he did not voluntarily reveal to me. —He poured a large sum of money into my lap a few days afterwards, and as I had before wanted courage to encounter his frown, I was now alike averse to banishing his smiles; and thus prolonged my painful ignorance. He charged me to be observant of appearances, and not to suffer the world to deprive him of its countenance, by letting it be known that he wanted it. A bitter tribute! which society exacts from those most sensible of poverty, because not born to it; and to which gentlemen of inferior rank in the army are often subject. How many of these are obliged by the severest economy, frequently indeed to the destruction of all domestic comfort, to maintain an apparent affluence, for which every sense is in turn a sufferer!

While plunged in this uncertainty, a new tie made its claim to my attention: —the fond indulgence of Mr. Montague increased with the hope of offspring;

yet I perceived with terror that he absented himself from home more frequently, while his domestic debts continually increased. The promises made him by various friends to procure him a post still however animated his spirits, and to me devolved those inferior cares of satisfying our wants and our creditors.

The period of my confinement unhappily strengthened the inclination of my husband for going abroad, by leaving him no society at home, and the nursing my boy prevented me from strictly attending to his conduct. I soon however found an alteration in Mr. Montague's temper. Plunged in gloomy reveries from morning till night, he scarcely heard what I said to him; and if I pressed to partake his chagrin, an abrupt answer often sent me away to weep out of his sight. Yet, unable to endure the grief which he had excited, he would then follow, and tenderly entreat me to forgive the unintentional emotion of the man whose every thought was devoted

to me and mine: true love never retains resentment, and a word served to reconcile us. Nevertheless, as evening came on, he still left me to weep over my child till very late, nay sometimes till morning. During these solitary hours, I pondered on every possible cause for his absence; and too often his father's horrid advice recurred to my mind. I at length concluded that he had, perhaps, only to support his wife and family, attached himself to some woman of fashion, and would neither wound my peace nor my innocence, by making so hateful an acknowledgement. Shocked to the soul at this belief, and no longer able to rely on the futile promises of persons uninterested in our welfare, I resolved, as the least evil, to address myself to the Duchess of Fernham; who had lately become a mother. I obtained admission to her; and, after indulging her ill-nature in satirising our chimerical plan of love and a cottage, she promised to consult with the Duke, as the only

effectual method of serving us. I acquiesced in this, merely because I knew not how to avoid it, and Mr. Montague had luckily been kept, by my fears for his safety, wholly ignorant of the Duke's ungenerous attack upon me. I knew not how to entertain any apprehension on my own account: vice is never dangerous to well-turned minds, but when veiled in the bright colouring of the passions; nor even then, perhaps, unless we have been accustomed to weigh this world and its goods against God and conscience. Mr. Montague had all the prejudices of such an education, to warp one of the best hearts which ever beat. The cold negligence or the insolent insinuations of patrons, equally disgusted him: but I had been long since tamed into submission, which was the first, nay the only, lesson of my youth. With surprise and gratitude, Mr. Montague, a few days afterwards, learnt that the Duke had promised to promote him (he was already in the same regiment), and had further

offered his services to procure him some lucrative employment. I rejoiced with my husband on the prospect, and fervently prayed that our ostensible benefactor might have a right to our gratitude. The decorum due to my own character, and Mr. Montague's honour, as well as a just regard for the peace of the Duchess, made me cautiously avoid seeing the Duke, unless one or both parties witnessed the interview. I persuaded myself that every consideration would prevent him from reviving projects which most probably originated in my unhappy state of indigence, and supposed disengaged affections. The retired, the anxious wife, the tender fearful mother, were not traits in my character likely to allure a nobleman enabled by affluence to indulge his taste for pleasure; but I was a young woman, and younger in understanding than years. I never once suspected that prodigality and avarice can inhabit the same bosom; and pride be the offspring

of meanness. The character of the Duke time alone could develope. Attentive to all which might indulge his vices, without interfering with his darling passion—parsimony, he found in those particulars of my situation which I have already mentioned, new motives for seducing me. My domestic habits—the delight I found in adding to Mr. Montague's indulgences abroad, by the severest economy at home—the innocent transport with which I clasped to my bosom his infant likeness—all, all cherished in the Duke this diabolical idea. What did he leave untried to accomplish the crime!—was there a calumny which malice could invent against the man whom I adored!—was there an offer wealth could make to poverty that was spared! I had now my own imprudence to lament at leisure, and that in total silence. My unsuspicious husband was bound to this selfish villain by a thousand petty obligations, all of which exposed us to legal claims. Obliged to

stifle my indignation, lest I should endanger my Montague's liberty, nay perhaps life, I had nothing to oppose to the wretch's artifices but an immoveable indifference. I suffered, however, severely in secret;—there I mourned too late my imprudent marriage. I had *entailed* calamity, for I pressed one infant to my bosom, baptised in my tears, and was near giving existence to another, who must be welcomed in the same melancholy manner.

This mode of conduct on my part, obliged the Duke to change his plan: how shall I tell your Ladyship that which he next adopted!—Sedulous in evil, he had long since discovered Mr. Montague's inducement to leave home. Led by the fallacious hopes which a gamester always entertains, that dear unhappy man had frequented company of the same turn, with a variety of luck. The Duke had lent him many small sums to squander away, and thus we were doubly undone. The horror which

I had ever entertained for this vice, and the shame of his frequent losses, prevented Mr. Montague from acknowledging to me his fatal propensity, till his money, credit, and commission, were all gone. The Duke, who anxiously awaited this cruel crisis, now offered him a sum that might ensure to us independence; but the gratitude this awakened in my husband was quickly extinguished, when he comprehended that to obtain it he must renounce his innocent wife and desert his beloved child! Animated by the pride alike of birth, affection, and honour, he struck to the earth the monster who had thus insulted him, and rushed out of the house, but not before he had heard the Duke affirm, that he might ruin his fortune, but could not retrieve his honour, if he supposed it vested in his wife. Wounded to the very soul with this infamous insinuation, Mr. Montague wandered about the streets one whole miserable night; which I spent in the most cruel alarms, the

most killing conjectures, for he had promised to sup at home. His passions being cooled at length, he recalled every circumstance from the day of our union to the present moment, and not finding any part of my conduct questionable, he bitterly reproached himself for having condemned me on the slander of a villain, whose only hope might rest on my being thrown upon his mercy. My husband now determined to return, and exact the truth from myself; but hardly was he in sight of his own door, before he fell into the hands of bailiffs. From the house of confinement, he wrote several letters to me, which were probably conveyed to the Duke; they certainly never reached my hands: and such answers were verbally returned as soon wrought Mr. Montague up almost to frenzy.

In this hour of desperation, my husband sent for Mr. Paterson, an attorney, in whose house we had once lodged, and whose professions of regard induced Mr. Montague to confide to him his

suspicions of my error, and entreat him to inform himself of my conduct and connections. That gentleman, convinced at once that I had been wronged, found me in danger of a premature labour, which alone, perhaps, had saved me from being duped by counter artifices. My agony so plainly marked my innocence, that the blessed consciousness of being the sole object of my affections, cheered even my poor prisoner, to whom I impatiently flew. I found him, alas! imprisoned for a sum which he could never hope to discharge, while the little all that he possessed was daily lessening. By his direction, and in the presence of Mr. Paterson, I wrote to the Duke, and retracing his whole conduct, proved that I had letters of his in my possession, which would disgrace him for ever did they reach the eye of his wife and friends, and that nothing but a full release could prevent their publication. Bold in contriving, the Duke was timid in executing his projects; and these menaces were so

judicious, that Mr. Montague was set at liberty the same evening.

Freedom is always sweet, but it loses more than half its charms, when we can no longer enjoy it among our equals. Our stock of money was small when Mr. Montague had been arrested, but on his discharge it was nearly exhausted: and I had the melancholy prospect of again becoming a mother hourly before my eyes. In this cruel conjuncture, I collected however all my fortitude, and began to prepare for the hour which I could not avoid. I sought an humbler lodging, and selecting whatever of our property we could any way spare, I sold the whole for twenty pounds. This, with the strictest economy, would hardly defray the expences of my lying-in: I therefore resolved to reserve it for that purpose, and look out in the interval for employment. My activity first seemed to awaken Mr. Montague from the stupor which this unexpected misfortune had occasioned; for, in dividing the ne-

cessaries from the superfluities, I had stripped myself rather than him, that he might not feel those wants which now were but the least evil under which hi mind laboured. I exerted every powe that reason or fondness gave me to arı him against the occasion, and shewed fixed determination to make the bestf a hard lot: but this very representatn aggravated I fear the misery which it vs meant to lessen. He wept on my bosm like an infant: but having no resoures against calamity in religion, he fnd in philosophy a very uncertain supprt. What we *do* suffer is often less iup-portable than what we are *supposed* tsuf-fer; and even relief becomes but a ad-ditional affliction, unless tendered ith a softness and delicacy which I ne not explain to your Ladyship. After long struggle with himself, Mr. Mdague determined to apply to Mr. Patson to employ him as a writer. Bu alas! that iron-hearted man profited by the knowledge of our destitute siation,

and offered him terms so contemptible that not the severest application could have insured to Mr. Montague a mere existence. Hardly did I think the utmost malevolence of fortune could tincture my husband's mind with the bitterness he shewed after this treaty had taken place.

I saw so little prospect of subsisting without adding my labours to those of Mr. Montague, that, however daunted by his outset, I found it necessary to apply to a fashionable milliner, of whom I had bought all the ornaments which I had afforded myself since I married. Having committed my child to the care of his father, I set out for St. James's, nor did I expect to return in less than three hours. The milliner, it is true, promised to employ me, but I soon found that I should be in Mr. Montague's predicament. The payments which she offered were, as she told me, general, and I in vain remonstrated that I had given thrice the sum when a purchaser; *that*, she answer-

ed, was the fair profit of trade. I, however, accepted any terms, and set out for home laden with unwrought finery. The tedious distance was beguiled by the certainty of adding to our little stock; and a long train of pious reflections calmed my mind, and reconciled it to that condition which only comparison and novelty perhaps rendered hard: for when I considered the innumerable persons whom I passed, my situation appeared almost elevated and easy. My heart, thus humbled, found a melancholy satisfaction in labouring for those whom I loved; the softness of every tie diffused itself through my nature, and I longed to inspire my dejected husband with my own ideas. It was night when I climbed the stairs of our little lodging, which was only a bed-room. The curtains were drawn, and supposing that Mr. Montague had worn himself out with thinking and was now asleep, I continued to talk to him, while I stirred the fire to make a light. A dreary silence thrilled

my very soul. I advanced towards the bed---ah, God! to behold---what?---the man whom I adored congealed in his own blood, with my hapless child quietly sleeping in his arms! The person who lodged under me heard me fall, and by her cries collected together the whole family. I was no sooner recalled to life than I gave birth to my youngest boy, in the very chamber where yet lay the body of his father. A letter, which was certainly designed to prepare me for this last calamity, was afterwards put into my hands. Mr. Montague lamented in that the unhappy propensity which he had early imbibed from his father---a propensity that at length obliged him to terminate his own existence in horror, anguish, and despair. He owned that, misled by those eternally erroneous presages which a gamester always entertains, he had been tempted to risk the twenty pounds which I had with such prudence collected; and having left the child in my absence to the care of the landlady,

he had gone to a house that he formerly frequented, where he soon lost the whole. On finding himself the miserable cause of infinite calamity, and without a hope of averting it, he could neither obtain his own pardon nor venture to supplicate mine. He intreated me to authenticate his miserable fate to his father, but never to entrust him with the care of my children; since, brought up in the severest penury, they might yet enjoy a peace unknown to wretches who were perverted by a passion for gaming. "I embrace my horrible fate," concluded he, "as the only one which can save me from witnessing miseries more dreadful than those I thus dare. Have courage, my injured love! a mother's ties will yet bind you down to existence: and you are only the *sufferer*, not the *inflictor*, of calamity."

As to myself, he had found a way to make exterior evils nothing to me.—I took the necessaries of life in silent horror and despair. That fine face on

which my soul doted was for ever before me distorted by death and disfigured by blood.—The feeble cries of my little ones alone reached my ears, and my heart with inward groans alone replied to them.

It was, however, the will of the Almighty to prolong my days, nor dared I curtail them. I afterwards learnt that the humanity of my fellow-lodgers had induced them to make a weekly contribution for my support; and the parish had been obliged to inter the precious dust of a man who had sacrificed his life, and the hopes of his family, to the criminal excesses of the worst of all vices.

The return of my strength took from me my precarious income, and obliged me to seek the subsistence which I could hardly resolve to receive.——I should weary your Ladyship were I to relate all the petty miseries and mortifications which I have since endured. Removed from one little lodging to another—seeking work from shop to shop—often disap-

pointed---often bringing tears instead of bread to my little ones---a few days' sickness totally impoverished me. Dreading every moment that I should be turned into the street, I yesterday confided to my landlady my family name, and most distressful story, entreating her to leave me time once more to address the Duke, whom the death of my cousin had invested with all the wealth to which I had, perhaps, a natural right. I had no longer any fear of having a charm for his eye. Penury and grief have anticipated time, and effected a ruin even more complete. I ventured to inquire for the Duke of Fernham, and was with infinite difficulty allowed to wait in the hall; but, oh! what passed in my soul when, on descending the stairs, he affected not to know me, and commanded his servants to spurn the insolent beggar from his door! Human patience ended here. In this bitter accumulation of every injury and affliction, I called down the justice of Heaven on the author of all my evils---

the indirect murderer of my husband: and dared, in the transport of my grief, to form the same horrible resolution which shortened his days. By your humanity alone, Madam, have I been rescued from suicide, and these helpless innocents from the bitterest severities of unprotected indigence. May He who can, reward you! and may they for ever pray for your felicity with a gratitude but to be equalled by their mother's!

LETTER CXXXIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

YOU will have the pleasure, Amelia, of seeing Mrs. Montague almost as soon as her interesting story: what other recommendation will she need to your generous heart, and that of Mr. Forrester? To her I have promised every thing that can make life desirable in your

society; and to *you* I promise an agreeable, estimable companion, who is softened and not soured by misfortune.

I could not, perhaps, have deprived myself of so rational an associate, had I not thought it advisable to fix her at once in an office which such a woman alone could fill. My hours of loneliness are rare; and, if any occur, they are fully employed in considering the past or the future: nor did I ever need an assiduous somebody to steal me from myself:—

> Ah! wretched, and *too* solitary, he
> Who loves not his own company!
> He'll feel the weight of't ev'ry day,
> Unless he call in sin or vanity;

says a poet who is almost buried under his own luxuriance.

Lady Sarah Monro, as I have already hinted to you, verges towards a period of life when love must be bought at any price; and that of Lord Westbury's daughters is so desired by her, that she sets no bounds to her indulgence. Thus every

day overturns the lesson of the preceding one ; and the dear innocents begin, obviously, to prefer a house where they are never contradicted, to one where many necessary restrictions are observed. Yet, situated as I am, it is a nice point to oppose a near relation. That superiority of judgement which I must necessarily arrogate is not the only charge to which I am liable. I might be censured as wanting kindness ; and, did I overlook longer this weak indulgence, I could not hope that the children would love her who constantly withheld it. I might thus lay up a fund of vexation for my Lord and myself. I have thought it my duty to represent all this to their dear father, who saw in one moment the probable evil, but left it to me to find the remedy. I could not discover in what way I could remove the children from their aunt but by sending them into the country ; and as Lord Westbury prefers passing eight months of the year there, they will not be for any length of time beyond the reach of our

observation. The delicate health of Louisa seemed a sufficient motive for this resolution, and the only point in question was, where I could find a person whose softness of nature would induce her to gratify all their proper requests, and whose understanding would lead her to overrule such as were unreasonable.

Mrs. Montague seems sent by Providence to take this charge upon herself, and rejoices in having it. She is to accompany the sweet girls to Arlington, as the residence where they may be best provided with masters; and I have recommended to her to be governed by your judgement upon all points which appear doubtful. She already knows that must be *mine*.

Pass as much of your time as you can spare at Arlington; observe her mode of conduct; and not only advise with her, but with me. I am not afraid of entreating *you* to cherish and indulge my dear girls: it is barbarous to diminish the hap-

piness of childhood. Take your own little ones often over; and send, at other times, for Louisa and Henrietta. It is needless to add, that the carriage is meant as much for you and yours, as for those whom it conveys down. I know you to be an excellent nurse and physician to the juniors.—Ah, what are you not excellent in?—Watch the cough of my delicate Louisa, and tell me if it increases.

All is packing, and disorder, here. In two days we are to set out for York, where we have taken lodgings, that my Lord may attend the races, which he has been accustomed to do. Afterwards we proceed for St. Edmund's Vale, where Sir James and his Lady mean to join us. Mr. and Mrs. Clifford promise to pass a few days there in their way to Northumberland.

Lady Sarah Monro is very fond of the Yorkshire seat, where she, it seems, was born; nor has she seen it since she married. Where these good folks are

all to be lodged *my* Lord, I suppose, knows: certainly his poor Lady does not. In October we think of passing a week or two in town; and after that shall be at Arlington till---I cannot tell you how long.

How do Mrs. Clifford and I agree, say you?---In truth, rather too well, my dear. She has quite a passion for my company, and would bestow half her time on me, had I no better employment for mine. I need not add, that I have many reasons for not accepting this favour; though, to keep the poor young creature out of worse hands, I often lose whole ages in discussing fashions with her, which I might spend much more agreeably: but we must not live always for ourselves. I have sometimes a dozen cards, ill-written and worse spelt, in one morning, only about caps, slippers, French laces, and hair-dresses. My messages (for who can write on such topics, and in such a manner) are either so ill-conveyed, or ill-understood, that she

comes for ever to me, almost swathed in muslin, to learn what I meant, which gives me the additional plague of her company, and a repetition of dull explanations. Yet as she never means to offend, I am resolved to have patience with her; but my Lord often wants that cardinal virtue; he hates to have our morning broken in upon. He, therefore, interferes, and in a moment reverses all my instructions, laughs to see how confused she is between us, and hopes that by some egregious blunder she will be induced to change her object of imitation, and he may again enjoy his breakfast. It is the meal in which he most indulges, and we usually meet to make it in the very library where my heart first ached on finding out that he was the elder brother.—But if Mrs. Clifford has made me the model of her dress, she has chosen another for her mind and manners in Lady Lisle: nor do I think that she could easily have rendered her want of judgement more conspicuous,

as she has palpably followed each lady in that which she least excels in. But poor Mrs. Clifford verifies my Lord's prediction in labouring to be a coquette; nor does she comprehend that penetration and refinement are so necessary towards forming the contemptible character, that no woman has shone in it who could not have done so in a much better.

Lady Lisle (a relation of the Clifford and Selwyn families), who married Sir John for love, and lives on cold terms with him merely for fashion, is just returned from Spa, where they have lavished away two fine fortunes in learning how to live handsomely, and have acquired the knowledge at the very moment of their lives when it can be of no use to them. This pair are at present the soul of every fine circle. Mrs. Clifford is happy to enter the beau monde with one so perfectly the ton as Lady Lisle, who is too much entitled to that distinction to choose for her constant

companion any person who is equally held up. She therefore finds Mrs. Clifford at once convenient and amusing. Were you to trust the account of either, you would believe them united in the strictest friendship. My Lord says that they are both in danger of being ruined. Mrs. Clifford knows not the delicate boundary of manners, and still less that of the heart; nor would you find it easy to persuade her that any thing can be wrong which is public and polite. Lady Lisle, on the contrary, thinks hardly any thing censurable that is concealed from observation, and lays out for admiration without a blush; nay, boldly justifies her coquetry by insisting that no man cares for a woman who is not admired by others. I sometimes turn my eyes on my Lord; she then shakes her little gay head, and asks me if I have the confidence to assert that he has been tried? not that, she adds, she ever means to go so far as to sacrifice her honour, which she guards chiefly that she may not lessen her train.

What can one say to a woman who thus speaks all she thinks, and I hope much more? Yet Lady Lisle blends with this dauntless levity an elegance and refinement but too seducing. Her indifference to Sir John was one day so obvious that I could not forbear observing, that had she not run away with him, I should certainly believe she preferred herself to her husband at all times.

"Why so I do, my grave Lady Overgood," was her flighty answer. "When Sir John grows indifferent, is it not high time that *somebody* should take a fancy to his little wife? Marry for love! my stars! is that a reason for loving for ever? Do you take me for *Hilpah* or *Shilpah*, who waited three ages before the question was asked, and as many after? Not I truly. I hate to see wives supply the wretches with an excuse for roving, by sitting at home and crying their eyes out, as if their husbands had done them a favour which no other man would, in admiring them. If Sir John is

no better than his neighbours, I am determined he shall know that it is a want of taste in *himself*, rather than of attraction in *me*. Now for my experiment; ---and let us see which will first convert the other."

Having secretly unclasped her bracelet, she arose and dropt it. A crowd of beaus flew to catch it, and contend for the honour of languishing over the white hand which she carelessly held out to have it clasped. She then turned with a look of triumph towards me, who now hardly knew that she was in the room; for my Lord was communicating a pleasant anecdote which he had just heard, and my attention was fixed wholly on him. Ah! can I fail to pity those whose looks rest not with a fond preference on one being amid a multitude? Who cast their eyes around indiscriminately---light and vacant as their hearts? The only pleasure of such women springs from vanity, and their pains from pride. Yet even coquettes sometimes feel that

nature designed them for more refined and interesting enjoyments.

Yesterday morning Lady Lisle came so early as to catch me happily employed in improving the minds of my darling girls. —" Always at home, Lady Westbury!" cried she, in her usual lively way. " Lord! how good you are to my little cousins! Ah, children, you may well love her! Am not I a civil soul (though I dare say in your heart you think me a mighty impertinent visitor) in coming to insist on your going to the subscription masquerade? Sir John sends you a ticket, and you positively *shall* go; so do not sit studying an excuse. We must have a grand consultation about our dresses. I have not slept a wink for thinking of mine; and am only afraid that I shall be in a fever before the delightful evening arrives."

" Excuse me, Lady Lisle, I have neither health nor inclination for these amusements; and certainly would not go without my Lord."

"Oh, that 's charming! what a dear antediluvian creature you are! How, in the name of every thing obsolete, can you think of going *with him?* But come, *it* shall have *its plaything, its protector!* though I will engage the man is reasonable enough to wish you only to please yourself."

"He knows I can do that only by pleasing him."

"Well, I am afraid I shall make nothing of you as to *ton*, though I exhaust myself in the effort. *I* should have laughed most egregiously if Sir John had offered to esquire me. But where may this good Lord of yours be?"

"In his study, I should imagine; he generally looks in upon us before he goes out."

"Well then, I shall see if he dares say nay, and it will be delicious in the interim to sit and fancy our dresses. I have secured Lady Harwood's diamonds; for she is such a dear primitive soul, that she would be shocked to death

were she discovered while she is yet in mourning:—though Mrs. Willis is bent on seeing, and being seen, and she has not been a widow so long, by at least a week. It is true she means to wear a *nun's* habit, and that you know is almost a weed; so I do n't see much difference between going and staying at home. As to Mrs. Clifford, she intends to be killing! finer than the finest! I just now left her, environed with prints, milliners, and habit-makers. She will absolutely make a dearth of silver fringe and tissue. What will you be? I mean to be a Russian; all fur, velvet, and jewels!"

"Really it will be losing my time to think of it, till I know my Lord's sentiments. I do not care how simple a habit I wear."

"Now, jesting apart, I must tell you that I think you are in the way to ruin a dear, tractable, charming fellow;—excuse me, dear Lady Westbury, but you will at this rate dwindle into a better

kind of house-keeper. I was just as foolish at first about Sir John, but a friend of mine opened my eyes. I am sure I shall be indebted to her as long as I live."

"If that, Lady Lisle, was your greatest obligation to your friend, I think it may be easily discharged. Were Lord Westbury capable of wishing thus to dictate my conduct, I should even then be better pleased than if the mean advantage was taken by me: but, in truth, our natures assimilate; what pleases him almost always pleases me, which nothing he dislikes ever can do. A conformity so involuntary, only redoubles his delicate attention, and increases in his generous mind my power."

"Is not this a little *too* refined, a *little* metaphysical, my dear? Yet it sounds mighty pretty and romantic; but then it 's horridly out of fashion: and as to my wretch, I should never teach him politeness by practising it."

"Ah, Madam! the politeness I meant

springs from affection, not affection from it."

"Well," cried she, half yawning, "you shall explain your method to me some wet dull morning;—but remember that I do not engage to follow it. I never could stand the laugh; never. Ah, here he comes!" added she.—"Pray, my Lord, do you make it a principle to come to your wife every day to be admired? I am positively in love with your clothes! Now," cried she, in a half-whisper, with infinite drollery, "I may ask him to take a trip to the carnival, and he could not handsomely refuse.—Do you know," turning to him, "I cannot prevail on Lady Westbury to promise to accompany me to our little masquerade, while half the women are fretting themselves sick from the impossibility of getting tickets. At least, she won't engage herself till she has asked her *Lord* and *Master leave!*"

"I am sure," said he, taking his little busy climbing Henrietta on his knee,

and fixing his eyes on me, with a sweet indulgent air, "Lady Westbury knows that her pleasure is always mine; but if any delicate consideration has made her hesitate, it will only increase the delight I ever feel at seeing her follow her own inclinations."

"Nay, am I not a most disinterested mortal? I ought rather to wish for a denial from one so capable of eclipsing me."

"Oh! your modest Ladyship's most obedient!" cried he, kissing her hand; "but do not ascribe too much merit to yourself from this humility. Were the truth discoverable, I fancy that you select my wife for your companion chiefly because she will leave your right of conquest unlimited, by confining *her* triumph to the last heart which, by the rule of *modern* politeness, she ought to desire. Do you mean to go, my Cecilia?"

"Yes, if you like it. Shall I choose a dress for you?"

"Oh! pray do. I do not care what: but no Turks, Vandykes, nor Spaniards.

Something grotesque and humorous, if you can. I am afraid I must leave you to dine alone to-day."

" Do n't concern yourself about us, honest man," cried my lively friend, " we 'll amuse one another."

Lord Westbury disengaged his neck from the soft arms of his prattlers, and kissing my cheek, bowed, with nonchalance enough, to Lady Lisle.

" Pardon this familiarity," cried he; " though, if we are not ashamed of *being* lovers, I know not why we should blush at *seeming* so. Morning visits at least should be unceremonious."

She spoke not a word, but sighed: and I, with the little girls, went to the window to see the last of him. He forgot us not, but smiling sweetly, drove away, as happy as he ever is charming.

" And now, Lady Lisle," cried I, " let us go and choose our habits. Your carriage waits, and mine of course will be needless."

She fixed her eyes on me, teeming with mixed emotions; but they presently filled with tears.---" Happy, happy Lady Westbury!" sighed she; " how poor, how selfish an existence do you make me feel mine to be! vanity, parade, insipidity, I find, too sensibly, form the whole of that life which only yesterday I thought so brilliant that even you must envy it!---How is it that you thus unite passion with reason, gaiety with softness?"

" I certainly can claim but *half* the merit, though blest with *all* the happiness. It is the effect of a heavenly temper, and a tender heart, in Lord Westbury;—the exquisite fruit of an affection which is grounded on esteem."

" Ah! few are the wives who resemble you, but fewer still the husbands who know how to value them."

" Pardon me, Lady Lisle, if I do not agree with you. I have frequently seen men strongly impressed with the sense of *decorum*, though very rarely with

that of *virtue*. True delicacy, I may say, *never* escapes their observation; though they sometimes are too indolent to adopt it. A lover, engrossed by his own emotions, is easily pleased, but to please a husband is more difficult. The best of us have many faults, and fondness is a common one in woman: in proportion as that is subdued before marriage, it is often indulged after it; and though novelty at first induces a man to encourage this weakness, repetition ever wearies him. I have observed deeply upon life, and should be unpardonable to allow in myself a folly which I have so severely censured in others. Lord Westbury reads my love in my heart, my life, my eyes, my conduct, but it rarely forms the subject of my conversation: he only wins endearment from me, when the ardour of his own heart justifies the fullest return from mine. Thus has he always something to wish, to ask, and to repay. I study no rule;—that enlivened attention to please,

which is common to true tenderness, directs my life. I understand a look, and obey a thought; for my heart is but the counterpart of Lord Westbury's, and is actuated by the same sentiments and sensations. The fullest confidence and esteem is the consequence of a conduct so guarded. Were my Lord to give his sentiments on the same subject, our account would probably differ only in one particular:—custom authorises his avowal of those feelings which custom obliges me to control. Every man, however his inclinations may wander, must, in the very course of things, spend too many hours at home not to give his wife a chance of pleasing; and in most of the matrimonial scenes which I have witnessed, the over-kindness of the wife has been troublesome, for that leaves the husband, however he may be disgusted, hardly any thing to complain of. It would, I own, break my heart to see home hateful to my Lord. My own interest, therefore, alone would induce

me to restrain myself on every point, where I think my sentiments might displease him. I live not for the multitude —I live only for the man of my choice; —he is, under Almighty God, the cause, the arbiter of all my actions— the only hope I have in this world, my *second* in that to come:—I grow almost serious, but you *asked* my sentiments.— It is the interest of every woman, as soon as she is married, to weigh all that may curtail or extend her enjoyments; and when I propose going abroad, it is chiefly to endear the hour of return."

"Oh! then I find we at least *go abroad* for the same reason—that we may not grow weary of our husbands."

"No, Lady Lisle—*I* go that mine may not grow weary of *me;* I never can be so of him:—but the sweet, the social hours when we *meet* at home again!"

"Oh yes, that must be charming doubtless! but is it not a *little* uniform, and a *little* troublesome?"

"*Troublesome* to be happy!"

" Then if you saw Lord Westbury particular to another woman, you would not be jealous?"

" I hope, acting thus, that I should not think so humbly of myself. It is at present my pride, that my eye never imposes any restraint on his; but if either a false delicacy or a meanness of temper should unhappily overcome my reason, if ever I should cease to esteem Lord Westbury or to deserve his esteem, I would resolutely punish myself with being silent.—It is enough to make *myself* unhappy; what right should I have to embitter the life of my husband with a suspicion perhaps wholly groundless, and complaints which most probably would be ineffectual?"

" But if, unfortunately, you should be *convinced*, as I have been, Lady Westbury?"

" I would banish him from my arms, though not my heart;—yet both should be open to receive him the moment he became sensible of his error."

" Well, you are indeed a wife of ten thousand!"

" No, Lady Lisle, you speak partially. I will at the last make an avowal of my soul's fond folly:---I fear that I could not long survive the loss of Lord Westbury's affection;---to deserve it is the only business of my life, and to possess it all my reward."

" Yet there *are* provocations;---gaming for instance."

" Ah, madam, now you state another matter:---I should feel it to be my duty to remonstrate on that subject; yet even *then* most cautiously would I avoid the appearance of condemning him I love.---The deference which I feel for my husband, arises from a long conviction of his superiority; but had I unhappily chosen a man of weak intellects, never should any human being have pleaded my example for despising him. Perhaps in the instance you have last mentioned, prudence, tenderness, foresight, ---all might be vain. A love of gaming

is, I believe, the most dangerous and incurable of all vices; since the impoverishment of circumstances is the least evil attending it:—yet while I could lay my hand upon my heart without its reproaching me with the breach of a single duty, I think that virtue might sanctify my bitterest tears, nor could I be wholly wretched."

"Your visionary system is quite captivating, and I have half a mind to try it a *little*."

"No, Lady Lisle, never try it a *little*;—if once you begin, persevere, I entreat. Think this conversation well over; and consider, should the attachment which you have seen deserve a thought, whether the reward in question is worth the trouble.—Ah! for what trouble should I not think it an adequate reward!—In the effort, should you want the advice of a friend, come to *me*.—And now let us order our habits for the masquerade."

Here ends a matrimonial lecture,

and my letter. When I say that it prevailed not beyond the moment, you, with me, will equally pity and blame Lady Lisle.

LETTER CXXXIV.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ

York.

HAVE you not remarked, Frank, that we have sometimes more various adventures crammed into a single week of our lives, that at other periods occur in seven years? I have been here only three days, and in that short time what a multiplicity of merry, sad, and dubious incidents have fallen to my lot! Lady Westbury would relate them in a much more clear and concise manner than your bungling friend; but that, in the first place, the chief part of them will never reach her ear, and, in the next,

that dear soul is too ill to chronicle her husband's foolish vagaries.

Nothing, you well know, can prevent George from wanting money: I was not therefore surprised at his coming to breakfast with me yesterday morning. We had made our usual arrangements for his accommodation, and I was drawing on my boots to accompany him to look at the horses, when a note was delivered to me. Concluding it, of course, to be merely some invitation or compliment, I pursued my employment, and desired George to cast his eye over it, and tell me if any answer was necessary. He read, and re-read, smiled, and read and smiled again. By a glance he cast towards the servants, I perceived them to be the cause of his taciturnity. Curious to know what this meant, I sent off the gaping footman and groom. In the note I found a singular appointment, very romantically expressed, from some woman, who made vast pretences to decorum, even while over-stepping its last

boundary.—" Pshaw ! is this all ?" cried I, tearing the scrawl to pieces.—" What are you about ?" interrupted George, snatching up the torn fragments : " can you be so cruel to a fair lady ?"—" I shall be so kind to myself as to avoid her," returned I, " and so civil as to forbear inquiring who she is."—" That 's more than I can do for the soul of me," cried the intriguing George ; " so if you are hard-hearted, pr'ythee give me the chance of supplanting your Lordship. She writes well ; and the caution and secrecy enjoined shew that she is not an avowed or purchasable mistress. I am outrageously impatient to know what country lady you have shot flying already : and as I am inclined to be less scrupulous, and more grateful, than you, who knows but I may prevail on her to like the *younger* brother better than the *elder*."—" A woman who thus unasked forgets what is due to her own honour, can have no claim on that of the man whom she addresses," returned I. " If you are

less delicate, the passport fell into your hands without my consent, and I here formally make over to you all my right in the fair inditer. But how, George, if this should prove some *haazrdous* adventure? Now I recollect, it has quite a Spanish air :---a green door---down a lonely lane---to stand ajar---then, does it not say, that you are to keep to the right through a shrubbery, at the extremity of which you are to rap thrice, gently, at the window of a saloon? What, if some crusty jealous coxcomb, while he presents you with one withered paw, should knock you down with the other?" ---"Oh! never fear," returned he, laughing; "we gay fellows, who live by our wits, have resources which you peers never dream of. For instance, I, too, have a couple of *paws*, as you elegantly phrase them, and a couple of legs moreover, as nimble as my neighbour's, when they are not tied together by honour. But as you seem so generously apprehensive for my safety, what think you

of accompanying me? You will then know the conclusion of the adventure without any breach of your conjugal fidelity."—"With all my heart," ended our chat.

You know the eagerness of George when engaged in any thing like an adventure. During the race he amused himself with popping his face almost into every coach on the ground, and if he saw but the end of a handsome nose which retreated from him, concluded that he had found the intriguing fair-one. Upon my soul, I began to doubt whether we should not both pass for highwaymen. The ladies, astonished at this general inquisition, began in turn to put out their heads and survey him; by which means he had appropriated to himself so many handsome belles that it was impossible to fix on any individual.

I reined in my horse, and stood for some time close to the carriage of the Duchess of Fernham, who had Mrs.

Seaton and Miss Frazier with her. The gentle Diana was kind enough to lament the confinement even of her rival. I found that dear creature worse than ever when I returned home, and was urgent to send an excuse to my party, that I might devote myself to Cecilia, who, with her usual delicacy, appreciated too highly so small a sacrifice, and declared that, ill as she was, she would be drest and go out if I forbore to do so only because she could not. I saw that she was in earnest, and left her.---George and I had agreed to dress as like each other as our travelling wardrobes would allow. I saw that his *heart*, or rather *head*, was full of his adventure, for he looked at his watch every five minutes, and, at last, dragged me away sooner than the appointed time, but not, however, before both of us had drank more than usual; though wine rather elevates than confuses my spirits, as you well know. I never felt myself in a more gay or happy humour, and began humming my Ceci-

lia's favourite song, which made me naturally turn my steps toward home. George, however, found not in his wife the attraction which mine afforded to me, and, claiming my company, we began our peregrinations as the anonymous billet had directed. The way was dark and lonely; nor was that amiss, as our clothes (for we were drest for the assembly) could not otherwise have failed to excite curiosity.—"Do you know," cried George, "that, if I did not think it treason against virtue to form such a surmise, I could almost fancy that this note came from our sweet cousin, the Duchess. I never saw embarrassment and tenderness more visible than in her fine countenance this whole morning. Every following moment seemed more to incline her to break a silence which seemed imposed only by the surrounding persons." The same idea had, I must own, occurred to me, but, I ought to add, without any reference to the note.—"Do you think so?" answered I, with a

quicker pulsation of the heart than became my Cecilia's husband. "Yet surely that can never be! it would, however, serve me right enough for making over a lady; but, if so, I shall expect—"—"Not me to give up my claim, I hope," answered he: "upon my soul I would not, had you resigned Venus herself to me."—"Keep *Venus*," said I, laughing, "I required of you only *Diana*." Scarcely had I ventured to trifle one moment with a name so respectable, before I became conscious of the indignity which I was offering to the most delicate of women, and reproved myself.

We were now in the lane, but it was so confounded dark, that we could no more discern a green door than the damsel herself. We followed the course of a high wall a good way, when at length we came to the gate, which, as Ranger says, stood 'invitingly open.' George was gone in an instant, and I remained, as we had agreed, upon guard.

I wandered a little about the garden, which appeared highly improved, and, by the rich scent, filled with exquisite plants. Led by all these particulars to consider the whole affair more attentively, I could not but conclude that some cursed blunder had put into my hands an appointment meant for another: nor did I recollect having looked on the envelope of the billet. The cool air of the evening, and these reflections, having settled my spirits, I resolved on following my brother, to make an apology should an error have brought us there, and prevent his adding any impertinence to it. I perceived a room lighted up when I got beyond the trees; and not remarking that I had turned to the left and George to the right, I hastened towards that room. It appeared an addition to a handsome house; but, though the windows reached to the ground, the shutters were closed above my reach. Making free, however, with the tub which held an orange-tree, I mounted, to examine who

might be in this apartment, and saw a lady elegantly attired as for the assembly, standing with her back towards me, while her maid was on her knees sewing some part of her drapery. That done, the maid withdrew, and the mistress sat down to adjust her bouquet. By this time I was so curious, that had she sat there till the next day I should not have stirred from my post. However, I was very near rolling off my stand over all the valuable exotics, when, by some accidental motion, the fair-one turned, and presented to me the well-known face of the Duchess of Fernham!

A thousand fluctuating, impassioned, inconsistent thoughts, now arose tumultuously in my mind. The lovely Diana drew off her gloves, and removed to a writing-table, where, with a ready pen, but irresolute as to what she should say, she remained sitting. Then taking a letter from her bosom she fixed on it an eye of tenderness, while large tears rolled down a cheek more than commonly vermillioned

by some powerful emotion. To complete my astonishment, upon her opening this honoured billet I became assured, by the peculiar mode in which it was folded, that it must be one of my own. A transport which I could not conquer agitated me. I descended from my post, and was just going (no longer doubting that the appointment had been hers, whatever her reason for so strange a step) to make the concerted signal, when, starting, at my descent I suppose, she threw open one of the sashes, and called Niobe, her favourite dog. A rustling, which her little pet was not able to make, alarmed her; and she asked, in a faint voice, "who was there?"—"It is your cousin —your Westbury, lovely Diana!" cried I, catching her in my arms, to save her from dropping at my feet.—"*My* Westbury!" returned she, in a touching tone; "oh, my Lord!" She was still ready to swoon, and I rather carried than led her into her dressing-room. A strange, incomprehensible incident, she called our

meeting. "Yet, surely," sighed she, "it is providential. I have wished this whole day for five minutes' conversation with you, my Lord, yet never did I hope to obtain it."---"Ah! am I yet blest with such a share in your thoughts?" returned I, kissing and pressing the hand which I retained.---"Forbear, Lord Westbury, I entreat!" said the lovely creature, with a serious air, while she dropt both her hand and her eyes. "Alas! if I wished to see you, it was rather for your sake than my own. The whole day have I debated with myself---How shall I confess to you?---yet, you must be told." Gathering, at length, voice and resolution, she resumed: "Yes, I *will* resolve to confide in the nobleness of your nature,---that honour which I never had the least reason to question."---Yet again she paused, lost in agitation and thought. ---"Speak, lovely Diana!" cried I; "oh, speak, and relieve me from this distressing suspense!"---"I ought to implore your pardon for ever causing it to you, even

for a moment, my Lord. But what a mortifying acknowledgement am I reduced to make! How extraordinary is the confidence which I am compelled to repose! You see in me now, Lord Westbury," cried she, turning from me, and speaking in a broken, inward tone, "an altered being. My fate is now inviolably bound up with that of him to whom my parents gave me. I cannot, in justice to you or myself, conceal his real character; since, alas! it obliges me to throw myself upon your compassion, to save me from caprices which I must otherwise sink under, and against which neither reason nor law supply any honourable remedy. From his conduct, you, perhaps, imagine that the Duke no longer remembers the partiality you once shewed for me. Alas! how are you deceived! Dissimulation is his boasted talent: his own heart is so incapable of generous feelings, that he will not allow the possibility of their existing in any other bosom. He knows all I suffer

when he obliges me to see you; yet he seeks the occasion, while he wounds my sensibility by injurious conjectures. His complaisance towards you is a mean and profound artifice, for the event of which I hourly tremble. It is the business of his life to watch your eyes and mine; yet, in every look, innocent as they have ever been, he finds food for his extravagant jealousy. He has insisted on my appearing this evening at the assembly, and means to engage you to dance with me; hoping, by this measure, to accomplish two purposes—that of convincing the world how free he is from every fear of either of us, and of convincing himself whether he has any reason for his incessant apprehensions. Yet, what reason has he ever had? and still he insults me! When you are gay and obliging, he tells me that you triumph to his very face: if you are grave or silent, he insists that I have advised you to be so: and thus in all which passes he finds occasion only to torment me and himself. Judge by this con-

fidence what a reliance I have on both your honour and sensibility. Never from this moment dance with, talk with, nor even look at, me, if possible. Since it is not permitted me to shun you, be truly kind in shunning me. Alas! my life would be a lethargy of sorrow, but that fear sometimes rouses me. To be the object of his *hatred* is terrible enough; but of his *love!*—oh, Heavens!"—

Not yet recovered from the surprise of first seeing me, all glowing with tearful, varying emotions, the sweet Diana unconsciously made this dangerous pause. Oh! never let man say, Thus will I feel, thus will I act. Every noble principle in my soul gave way at sight of her sorrow. Another tear, the least breath, a single sigh, seemed powerful enough to overwhelm them all. Silence, loneliness, the tender certainty that I alone throbbed at her heart, and lighted up with love's softest colour her ingenuous beautiful countenance;—the weak desire of giving that mean-spirited dotard her

husband cause for his odious suspicions; ---all these ideas once afloat in a head not over-clear before might well inebriate reason, and collect into my heart a thousand fond tumultuous hopes and wishes. Of all her charms, I remembered only her beauty; of all her merits, only her love. My eyes by some chance, at this dangerous crisis, past from her hand to my own which clasped it, and fixed themselves on a miniature of Cecilia that I wear in a ring. How powerfully did even that imperfect likeness of my soul's darling seem to reproach me! Shall I efface that happy smile? sighed I to myself. Shall I again plant thorns in that fair bosom? Dare I involve this angel in sin, and my beloved in sorrow? Dare I resolve to become, in possessing both, unworthy of either? Cecilia, thou hast not suffered in vain! It was thine to conquer, though absent. Virtue herself preserved me in thy likeness, and the kindling flame of sense was stifled at once. Reason restored the Duchess

all her dignity, and honour bowed before it. I arose, and resigning with respectful tenderness a hand which I had too boldly retained, was retreating with a promise ever to abide by her advice and wishes, when suddenly, as it were, recollecting herself, she enquired by what singular accident I had been led to her apartment? I gave her a vague account of the written appointment: but what a severe indignation pointed her fine features as I spoke.---"And you too, Lord Westbury, could *you* thus insult me?" cried she:—"could you think me capable of thus voluntarily degrading myself? Ah! how little does any one know me!—born as it appears to be universally misjudged! No, my Lord, neither sorrow, misfortune, nor cruelty, could thus debase me. Your esteem has ever been necessary and precious to me; nor know I where I should sometimes find consolation but in the belief that, as I have ever deserved, I still possess, it. Oh! grant it to me, I intreat, if you would

wish me to endure that fate which too strict an obedience, and too susceptible a heart, have for ever involved me in. And now begone, I implore you! This detestable note must be another artifice of the Duke's, who would realize his worst fear, rather than want the poor gratification of reviling and disgracing me; and most unaccountably have you fallen into his snare! I tremble for the representation which this meeting admits of; for, alas! the world is but too easily misled in its judgments. In truth, we ought never more to meet." She stopt; her voice was impeded by an anguish which she vainly attempted to stifle; and her eyes, though suffused with tears, yet shone with softness. "One moment of sincerity, my Lord," resumed she, "and then farewel—would I could say *for ever!* You, to whom alone such a confession may be trusted, compassionate a heart which vainly seeks incitements to the duties it has resolved to fulfil. Hide yourself in pity from these eyes, nor present

them with a contrast which redoubles my despair. May the happiest of women make you the most happy of men! This is the first wish of my soul, and the only one which I dare hope to obtain. My next is, that you will leave me at once, and for ever. I demand this," added she, in a voice yet more low and choaked, " as the test of your esteem, perhaps of your *humanity*."—" Lovely, injured, amiable Diana!" cried I, clasping her with fraternal affection in my arms, " what an affliction must your fate ever be to me! Why cannot I interfere, without degrading you, to mitigate its severity! Painful indeed is your duty; but to act up to it will excite wonder no less than esteem. She of whom you speak so tenderly is allied to your nature, and knows us both too well not to wish herself as well known to both. She will lament to hear that your society and friendship cannot now be hers; for with a scrupulous precision will I obey you. Never, never was it in my *power* to make

you happy, but when can it cease to be in my *will?*"

Hardly had I concluded before a noise, which seemed to approach us, startled the sweet Diana. Among several voices, she distinguished that of the Duke; and running in silence to the open sash, caught my hand, and drew me after her into the garden. When near the gate, she bade me fly, as I valued her peace, or reputation. I wanted no other adjuration, and hastening up the lane, was in a moment overtaken by George; who ran on with a florid harangue, without my distinguishing a single word he said: so entirely had recollection retreated into my heart. I imaged to myself the storm that must follow, when the Duchess, drest for the assembly, was met returning through the damp garden, fluttered, apprehensive, and silent. I knew that the servants would infallibly find the garden-gate open, and thought it too probable that the upright nature of my angel-cousin might rather induce her to

incur every evil which would follow sincerity, than shelter herself by a single falsehood. I neither knew how I should acquit myself, if any question arose, nor, if she had owned our extraordinary meeting, be able to account for my nocturnal appearance in the garden of the Lord knows who. George, having at length ceased to speak, began to wonder at my taciturnity. Finding it continue, he shook me by the arm, and asked if I was walking this round pace in my sleep. I answered in some vague manner.—"Why the devil a word," cried he, in a rallying tone, "do you seem to have heard of my long story. You are a pretty companion truly for a frolic of this kind! I want to know how you came to absent yourself from your post. If you were under my command, you should have fifty lashes for your breakfast."—"Pr'ythee," cried I, "how did *you* dispose of yourself? were you the confounded Marplot who alarmed the family?"—"That 's good enough! as if I had not made the same

enquiry a quarter of an hour ago. Upon my soul, this is a pretty way of apologising to a scared lover, whom you put to flight before he had time to win the lady, or even discover who she was!"—"Why, did *you* find a lady?" cried I, in more amazement.—"To be sure I did;—was it not my errand? I am not such a hero in romance as to worship the hamadryads by moonlight. The incognita told me too a long story of her love, supposing me to be your Lordship, and I am apt to think meant to be persuaded to prove it; but before that was possible, some cursed uproar in the house put me to flight—though not till I had ravished from her arm a ribbon that I flatter myself she will not miss, and which will identify her to us at the assembly."

And now I was petrified: I plainly saw that there was some light woman concerned, and I had only by ill fortune blundered on the Duchess; who being led, by what I had said, to conclude that my coming by appointment was an arti-

fice of the Duke's, might fatally involve her own reputation by an incautious reproach. This unknown fair-one, it was obvious, had terms to keep with the world, and would carefully guard her own secret.

I had never heard in what family the Duchess had taken up her abode; nor could guess who George's incognita might be. I peevishly reproached him for not discovering.—"Did I not say that I had stolen a ribbon from her arm on purpose?" cried he, shewing me a rich white and silver knot. I could not but own that his reputation for gallantry was merited. My own part of the adventure was too delicate to venture a word upon; and to do George justice, he was too much the gentleman to urge the enquiry.

We agreed that we could not be too quick in getting our hair retouched, and appearing at the assembly; where I doubted not but we should sooner or later discover the lady with the single sleeve-knot: and I would have given a

thousand pounds to have been as certain of Fernham's furious conclusions on meeting his lovely wife, and the modes by which she appeased him. Lost in these reveries, I was not a very accurate spy upon the ladies as they came in; though George had fixed me in a good point of view for the purpose, while he occupied another station, from whence he never stirred. Many gay belles in white and silver had swept by, without any visible deficiency of ornament; and George, crossing over to me, owned that his hopes decreased apace. The parties were now forming for country dances, and both of us were in duty bound to seek our pre-engaged partners, when I saw a set of ladies enter, with Mrs. Seaton, and Miss Frazier. Convinced from their appearance that the sweet Diana no longer meant to come to the ball, I felt, I own, a deep anxiety to learn why; when George, running up to me, plucked my arm, and, hiding his face behind his chapeau, fixed on me a most lamentable gro-

tesque look, and enquired if I did not see his *Tisiphone*, not, alas! *Venus*, as he had fondly imagined. I followed his eyes, till those of both rested on Mrs. Seaton, whose left arm too surely was without the knot. The artifice, haughtiness, and malice, of her nature would have saved her even from suspicion, but for the proof which George held in his hat. But Heraclitus could not have withstood the mortified air with which he surveyed the lady; and I burst into such a fit of laughter, that he could not forbear joining in it. With the consciousness of a guilty mind, she half glanced a scornful eye on us, as guessing that she was the cause of our mirth; which was far from inducing either of us to suppress it.

I soon after saw that she was seated in the midst of a circle of tabbies, to whom she was eagerly expatiating; while they shewed signs of curiosity and surprise. I could not doubt but that my unfortunate cousin was her subject, and stole silently behind the attentive

group to find if I was right. The whole circle were too much engrossed to remark the station I took; and as Mrs. Seaton speaks both loud and sharp, I understood every word she uttered.---"*To night*," answered she, to some interrogating tabby: "I am doubtful whether you will ever see the Duchess here again: I am the *last person* to speak of family affairs, but this will be public as the noonday sun. We all know the Duke is as jealous as he is niggardly, and that the Duchess once was attached to Lord Westbury, nay perhaps---but let that pass.---We have had a most curious scene at Sir William's this evening ---quite the comedy of the Suspicious Husband!---We were all dressing for the assembly, *as I thought*, when home came the Duke in a dreadful rage, at missing Lord Westbury from the dinner, and finding that when he went away he had left his carriage and servants behind. Poor Lady Douglas intreated his Grace to stay till he was cooler, and not affront

the Duchess: but to her apartment he would go; and, for fear of what might follow, we all went with him. The bird, however, was flown. The Duchess occupied the new apartment which opens on an arcade filled with flowers, and thither we hastened:—still she was not to be found. However, further in the garden we suddenly met her; alone, trembling like a leaf, and unable to utter a word. —The Duke thundered the name of Lord Westbury in her ear, and she sunk on the gravel in a fainting fit. Round her neck she certainly had thrown a handkerchief, marked with that nobleman's coronet; but how she came by it she best knows—to be sure this made against her:—in her bosom, too, a letter was found, which the Duke shewed to us all;—it was without doubt from Lord Westbury. The Duke was in too great a passion to discover much, and the Duchess was hardly able to speak. —I think she said that the letter had been sent to her before she married;

but that excuse was, you know, a thing of course, and passed for nothing. The Duke called her an infamous woman, born for his misery, with a thousand harsh names. At length she plucked up spirit to tell him, that had he at first questioned her with the candour of a gentleman, she should have answered with the humility of a wife; but having nothing now to fear from a man who had already thus defamed and insulted her, he might employ his talent in conjecture, for one word she would not offer in vindication of her present appearance. He ordered the travelling carriages to be got ready, and said he would carry her that minute to her ridiculous old father, and there publish all her infamy.—'To carry me to my father, is the only favour you can possibly do me,' cried she haughtily; 'and to the hour of my death will I bless the opprobrium which restores me to my dear misjudging parents, since at the same moment it releases me from you.—Sir Wil-

liam, Lady Douglas, Mrs. Seaton, Miss Frazier, I call on you to witness the eternal separation between me and the Duke of Fernham---I conjure you all to mark that it is by mutual consent, and for life---Is it not?' The Duke, who was traversing the room, foaming with rage, assented with a tremendous oath. ---' I too will call on the name of God,' cried she, ' but with humility and devotion---He, and He alone, can bear me through this, and every trial which his will ordains. I call then Almighty God to witness, how much more willingly I part with you than I ever became your wife!'---' Yes, yes, vile woman!' cried he, ' now I believe you.'---' Happily,' added she, ' I was not born to depend upon your *generosity*, and shall leave to my father the arrangements of fortune. I require of you only the use of the carriage, and the attendance of the servants, whom I have till now called my own, that it may be known *with* whom, and *to* whom, I go.---And now,

my Lord, I take an everlasting leave of you,—avowing, before God and this company, that I never, in a single instance, have swerved from my duty as a wife; and had I not entertained too high a sense of that due from a daughter, perhaps had never become so.—Time and circumstances may so far abate your resentment as to induce you to do me justice:—I yet am anxious to preserve the good name which no human being is entitled to rob me of.'—'Ay, ay,' cried he, shaking his head, 'you have both been careful enough of that I doubt not.'

"To make short of my story—The Duchess, having torn off her elegant dress, threw herself into the travelling chariot, and is already many miles on her way to her father, escorted by the Duke's servants."

What an extraordinary incident did this appear to me!—That I should have sullied the character of her whom I revered!—and so innocently too! I was cursedly

provoked at not having given her fool more cause to defame her ;---yet that she was unspotted, alone, perhaps, enabled her to go through this grievous trial. How if he now should vent his rage on me ?--- To answer with my sword would be to make the stain which I lamented indelible.—Yet my proud soul would not have him urge the enquiry, for I feel that I could not give any explanation. Involved in these reflections, I hardly heard those which the diabolical Mrs. Seaton was making ; but the artful manner in which she inferred the Duchess to be guilty, while appearing to defend her reputation, at length roused me.---Ah, sweet and innocent Diana ! thought I, shall this vile intriguing woman make thee the victim of a confusion caused by herself? No, well does she merit her share of suffering, and thy jealous fool to blush for his own injustice ; in the conviction of which, if he really loves thee, he will be sufficiently punished. —This way, and this way alone, could I

effectually serve my fair cousin, who could not, as I well knew, regret the act of separation, though she must disdain the cause assigned for it.

Struck with a whimsical thought, I hastened after George, to tell him that our nocturnal adventure must transpire, or the Duchess of Fernham be the sacrifice; and that I wished him to fix the silver knot in his chapeau, in confirmation of the indirect avowal which I was going immediately to make to the censorious circle of ancients.—"Really you must excuse my doing any such thing," returned he gaily; "and for two very sufficient reasons:—in the first place, I should not choose to have my wife justified in her nonsensical jealousy; and in the next, I cannot resolve to bring such an imputation on my own taste in the female world."—"Give me the knot then, and retire, to evade all further enquiry," was my abrupt answer to him; when suddenly advancing to the scandal-loving party, who were on the point of

separating, to circulate the tale—" Stay, ladies," cried I, seizing on the withered hand of one hag with whom I was acquainted, "partial evidence sometimes has convicted the innocent, while the culprit remained a spectator---It was not from the arm of the lady whose character Mrs. Seaton has defamed, that I could take this ribbon,—it is wanting on another." ---This equivocal speech caused every female to look first on her neighbour's arm, and then upon her own; till the eyes of the whole company were fixed on Mrs. Seaton, upon whose right arm the companion to the knot I held was still visible. Her own conduct, however, alone could confute or confirm what I had advanced, and she seemed to resolve on saving herself: when casually glancing her eye towards her arm, and missing the knot, she lost all presence of mind, and either really fainted, or pretended to do so. All hands were lifted up, and the disgraced prude

carried out of the room, into which she never returned.

So here have I, by an ingenious mode of telling only as much of my story as made for my cause, cured, as I hope, one lady of intriguing, and twenty of detraction; not that I imagine I shall benefit society by a recipe too dangerous for general use.

As I owed it to my cousin to remain at the assembly, I danced till late; and by only laughing at what had past, without detailing any thing, I gave the whole company a conviction that the fair Diana had no share in it; nay, I have the presumption to flatter myself, that when Mrs. Seaton's adventure reaches the ear of the Duke, it will send him after his injured wife, to implore her pardon, who thus will learn that she owes her vindication to me, although it will be impossible for her to guess how I effected it. Somehow or other, the news shall certainly be at

Bromley-grove as soon as the lovely fugitive; for fain would I have her know how I prize that happiness which it will never be in my power to constitute.

Thus ends (in Richardson's phrase) the history of the lady and the sleeve-knot. Devil take the sleeve-knot, and eke the lady too! say I. George is making the story into a ballad, and if Mrs. Seaton is not silent as death, he vows he will have it sung through the streets of York.

I returned late, but in the gayest spirits, and meant to amuse my Cecilia with the ostensible part of my story; for not even to her would I commit that which relates to my cousin: but she, dear soul! had been so indisposed all the evening as to have ordered another chamber to be made ready for me. Shocked as I was at this news, fatigue overpowered anxiety, and I slept till a most unconscionable hour this morning. I have been to her door, but find that my beloved never closed her eyes till an hour

ago. May her present peaceful slumber restore her in health and peace to

WESTBURY!

P. S. Remember that not even to Mrs. Trevilian must the Duchess be named on this occasion. My wife is much worse; nor dare I tell her a tale which might agitate her. Lady Harington shall hereafter be my proxy. She loves at once my Cecilia, my cousin, and a good jest: and since her own kinswoman was in reality the culprit, she will have candour enough to pardon my conduct.

LETTER CXXXV.

FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

St. Edmund's Vale.

YES, you have reason to value your own discernment. But if you imputed

my silence to vexation, you can impute my now taking up the pen to no other cause. Is it possible that I can have been deceived in the character of my Cecilia? Is it possible that the angel whom I so fondly exalted above our cloudy hemisphere is already fallen into the common follies of her sex?---is not only jealous, but proudly, capriciously, unjustly, arrogantly jealous? She ventures to condemn me on the most casual circumstances; nor does she even deign to enquire if those are warrantable. She delivers herself up to an imaginary misfortune, and suffers as though it were a real one:—a failure at once in her heart and her temper, cannot but afflict and mortify me. Incapable myself of suspicion, where I love, my confidence is unbounded; and nothing but conviction can induce me to withdraw it.

Is there no effectual cure for this depravity in the soul? If not, farewel at once to all my boasted happiness. Every month, nay every day, may supply her with causes like those over which she

now broods; and silence, with coldness, as entirely dissever our hearts as the bitterest reproaches would. After I had conquered myself in an instance so trying, how unwise is her conduct!

I returned home all tenderness and anxiety. I meant to unfold my whole heart, and to find in the fondness of hers a recompence for the self-denial I had shewn. I found not, however, my affectionate interesting Cecilia, but a stiff constrained likeness of her;—with averted eyes, red and swelled, cold and reluctant hands, a studied detention of those whom I wished not near, and a repulsion whenever I approached, which I could not account for. What can possibly have occasioned so great a change? I sometimes think that I ought to insist on a tête-à-tête. I resolve to demand her reasons for thus retiring from me, and am determined to make her blush at her folly, while I assert all my rights over her: yet no sooner do I see than my nature yields to her; I reflect upon my-

self for being angry at a weakness perhaps beyond her ability to conquer, and certainly pitiable, as it punishes herself yet more than me. In a moment her air of sadness and indifference exasperates me again. I rise, traverse the apartment, impatient to get rid of those impertinents, who, loving her almost as well as I do, will not quit us a moment. Every hour I pass with her increases my vexation, by increasing its cause; and I frequently make my exit abruptly, because I will not expose either her or myself to visitors or servants.

At night, when no intruder could prevent the expostulation, her woman stops me--the chamber is guarded--"My Lady begs your Lordship will not disturb her." This is as effectual a bar to my entrance as any that man has ever yet invented; for Cecilia has hitherto been so rational as well as tender, that I had no merit in yielding to her wishes, nor can I now break in upon them without

incurring a censure from my very servants.

Then, to shut *me* out of her chamber, who ever took such pleasure in watching over her welfare, and whose eye has seemed till now the delight of hers, however weak, however ill she has been! Both my heart, my pride, feel this as an insult, nor know I how I shall forget it.

Has then fortune really mismatched me? How desirous was I to prove that the adoration which my soul paid to Cecilia, even when an angelic girl was in competition, had been only what it ought to be, in justice to a merit so pre-eminent! Let me not think that my judgment was impeached with reason. Ah! if I could have been happier with—Never, never let that become a question, lest my evil genius should suggest that it may yet be in my power. No, let this perverse Cecilia only continue what she has hitherto been, and I would not exchange

her for an angel. She, and she only, can oblige me to repent my choice; and even then, I shall conclude matrimonial happiness to be wholly a chimera, for never did two mortals call on Heaven to witness a more promising union.

Perhaps it is not in the nature of women to form lasting attachments. Vanity is the main spring of their passions, which they are taught rather to hide than subdue. Advantages often independent of ourselves influence their choice (for *all* the sex certainly do not meanly seek to entrap us), and not being accustomed to examine into causes, they mistake a restless desire of superseding their equals for love: of course that man becomes the most pleasing to them who has it most in his power to gratify this cherished foible. Yet vanity is as capable of satiety as love. It may too revive; but, still similar to that passion, never for the same object. New superiors attract the aspiring eyes of women who have once sacrificed them-

selves for distinction; but after marriage the hope of pre-eminence is lost, and those who act from that motive must sink into a peevish despondence, till the lot becomes hardly endurable which they once thought the height of enjoyment. But am I not at this moment stooping to a meanness I detest, in satirising the whole sex for the fault of an individual, whom I of consequence place at the head of it, and who certainly never was actuated by the foible I arraign? Cecilia, dear Cecilia, nobly abjured for an imaginary unworthiness the man whom she adored; and in him title, fortune, and all which the world reckons valuable. Did she not rather resolve to die than to complain? and even in dying, did she seek the poor pride of being bewailed? Did she not, after all, joyfully embrace a supposed poverty with him whom she had rejected in affluence, only in the generous belief that she could soften its rigours? Ah! shall I dare to condemn the woman in whom so many excellences

centre for *one* failure? Yet, oh! how disgraceful to herself and me is that failure! how *little* does it make her in my esteem!

Oh, jealousy! thou raging ill,
Why hast thou found a place in lovers' hearts;
Afflicting what thou canst not kill,
And pois'ning Love himself with his own darts?

How, how, I still repeat, shall I cure my Cecilia? for to indulge a weakness which must for ever increase, were downright frenzy. I should tremble soon if a woman only fixed her eyes on me, and certainly could not but have the more inclination to forfeit my fidelity when I found it distrusted. How too does this cherished folly estrange her own affections! She, who till this juncture could endure my absence only from motives of refined prudence, now is oppressed, afflicted with my company. She absolutely sent me from her at York, and, far from saying that she would hasten her journey, assured me that she would come on at *her leisure*. Adieu.

LETTER CXXXVI.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN.

St. Edmund's Vale.

HERE am I, and here too is Cecilia, no longer mine: we lead an estranged, polite, singular kind of life at this present writing, though nothing is apparent but harmony. Lady Harington and Miss Rivers, with Perceval, met us here. I soon saw that they discovered things were not in their usual way; and taking this (like a fond fool of a husband) as a proof that my wife was yet wise enough to avoid choosing any confidante, I thought her considerate delicacy implied a desire to be reconciled. This tempted me to seek a moment on the eve of the following day, when the company were engrossed by something that amused neither of us, to throw myself on the sopha by Cecilia, kiss her cheek, and congratulate myself on her recovery from an at-

tack which had so greatly alarmed me. "*Indeed!*" replied she, in a faint tone. "How affronting is that *indeed*," returned I, "my sweetest love! But I will not be captious. This coldness, this petulance, is I hope only the effect of indisposition, and will vanish with that. But why thus shut me out of your apartment? Can any one around you have half so tender, so anxious an interest in your recovery?"—"Oh! my Lord," cried she, turning from me, and in tears, as I judged by the tone of her voice, for it was too dark for my eyes to inform me, "you are cruelly kind!" She stopt at these words, yet as if she wished to say more, and blew the rest away in a sigh—a tremulous sigh, drawn as it seemed from the bottom of her heart. I dropt her hand, and sharply enough perhaps answered, "I could never make that complaint of you, Cecilia; but, unless you can give me a more satisfactory reason than whim, I desire that I may not again be intercepted by a sentinel in my

way to your chamber."—"Nay, my Lord, if you command, I have nothing to oppose, and must obey. Hard as compliance may be, whenever I know my duty, I will not act in opposition to it."—"What *is* all this?" retorted I, angrily. "My *commands!* your *duty!* you will *obey!* this is a style not less singular than new. Take care, Lady Westbury; you trifle with your own happiness no less than mine, or you have lost your senses."—"I would rather have lost those than the only heart I ever sought," sighed she. When on seeing our friends approaching, she rose abruptly, and quitted the room.

Whether Madam James kept her post, or abandoned it, I never knew; for I was too much offended to appear again at the door of her apartment.

I must frighten her into reason, for a conduct like this I can never long endure. I shall perhaps be on the wing to-morrow; and, if so, shall leave the following letter behind me.

To Lady Westbury.

"You would not have any right to complain, Lady Westbury, if, when you assume the mere wife, I became the mere husband: but I equally disdain a life of coldness, or of altercation; and if I find not happiness at home, shall fly the spot where it is not to be found: if one apartment is too small to contain us, Cecilia, so is one kingdom. When did I mention the word *duty?* When did I claim a sacrifice from your *obedience?* Do I not even at this moment make the greatest to your caprice? Ah! what are the rights of a husband to him who has lost those of a lover? Yet is it possible that you should deliberately render me an alien from my family—an exile from my country?

If such upon reflection should be your choice, I shall certainly submit to it; for never will I control her to whom I have given my heart. My fortune,

my children, are at your disposal: be a mother indeed to the latter; you ought, if you deprive them of a father.

You imagine, perhaps, because I bore in silence the follies of a woman so infinitely your inferior, that I ought to submit to yours:---but her I had long ceased to adore; while you reign in my heart, and I cannot share the punishment of the devil himself who lived in sight of the Paradise he lost. Oh, Cecilia! why will you obviate my sense of self-reproach, and become the avenger of my involuntary injustice?---is it possible that you no longer love me?

To jealousy I cannot ascribe your conduct---Had such a weakness ever such a foundation?

Consult well with yourself, and decide my fate immediately. Oh, my misjudging sweet Cecilia! weigh well the importance of your answer, and at once recal me;---*now*, or it may *never* be in your power. I may yet be overtaken,

before any human being knows the unhappy difference between us."

* * * * * *

I am so well acquainted with the generosity of the heart in question, that can I once purify it from suspicion, never more will human foible find admission into it. Cecilia knows not how much she injures herself by this constrained insolent coldness.---Never did the fair Diana appear *so* fair as while thus defamed by implication; and I could almost resolve to love her dearly.

* * * * * *

Four in the morning.

I can no longer endure her behaviour, she does not condescend to affect either illness or anger: she, I dare say, is persuaded that this conduct is entirely heroic;---to me it appears absolutely intolerable. Passion has been often pleaded in palliation of violence and reproach, but who ever heard it urged as an excuse for silence? Some busy officious soul or other must be at the bottom of all this.

—A heart tender, animated, ingenuous, could not sustain itself against the one it most loves, were there not an intervening person to whom all the imaginary grievances are confided, and by whom they are aggravated. I sometimes think that Lady Harington ;---yet she is Cecilia's echo,---too insensible, and not a little unobserving :---indeed she rather adopts the opinions of my wife as axioms, than ventures to differ from her ; —and surely that wife is too worthy of the name to divide a heart, which is mine by every tie, with those who cannot judge it. Is it possible that the woman who during a warm intimacy, when sorrow for ever led her to unreserve, did not by a word impeach a lover who was to all appearance ungrateful, should now publish unauthorised injurious suspicions of her husband? I have heard, with pleasure heard, my Cecilia assert to a complaining wife, that " silence was in matrimony a double duty, owing in the first place to the man whom she had

chosen, and in the next to herself."— "What," as she justly added, "must his nature be, who long remained insensible to an affection so discreet? Let ladies rather think they save themselves than the erroneous husband by this prudent silence; for must they not otherwise impeach their own judgement in avowing that they made choice of a partner for life whom they could never honour?"

After speaking thus, can Cecilia have fallen into so despicable an error? I now hold in my hand a letter from her to Mrs. Forrester, by perusing of which, could I resolve to break the seal, I might at once convince myself; but I will not assert my authority, lest I should deserve the pain I now feel. My horses are ready---not a pang can I give to her heart which my own does not first suffer ---but desperate diseases must have desperate remedies! Adieu.

LETTER CXXXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

ALAS, my Amelia! how can I sufficiently prepare you for what must follow?---The dreadful hour is at length arrived, when neither Heaven nor man can add to my afflictions.---Of that happy fate for which I have been so greatly envied, nothing remains but fortune, title---vain, vain distinctions!—Yet I repeat this with a calmness astonishing even to myself. I have considered till I formed my mind to a temporary kind of stoicism, which is perhaps but the extreme of grief---despair.

You will hear (for ill news flies fast), perhaps before this reaches you, that your poor Cecilia is separated from —oh, Lord Westbury, is this possible!— Reasons, which I can neither *resist* nor *give*, have reduced me to impose this

last of miseries on myself.—I am therefore at length delivered up to the malice of the world, for never will I urge an error of my husband's as my acquittal;—that, however, is but the least evil of my present fate; and I make without hesitation this last sacrifice to a love which has long since broken my youth, as it now must my heart.

I can resolve to endure all censure but yours, my Amelia; and by your past knowledge of my conduct, I implore you to approve, without enquiry, of my present decision. Indissoluble holy ties seal my lips even to you upon this melancholy subject; need I add that the bitterest necessity alone could have induced me to sanction this measure?—Yet weep for me, my friend;—once more weep for your poor Cecilia:—for her whose untoward destiny has hardly called upon you for any other sympathy than tears.—My own are at length, I believe, quite exhausted; and the few

drops which this sad reflection collects seem rather fire than water.

Alone once more in the universe, a withering bud torn already from the tree on which I was so lately engrafted, it imports not where I fall down and perish.---I may, perhaps, be indulged with a choice.---Yet, ah! could I bear to see you,---to read the sad history of my heart hourly in your looks, and marked by many a generous sigh!—No, I would, methinks, be forgotten by the whole world, if I am indeed forgotten by Lord Westbury.

I have, however, conquered every weakness in addressing him.---May that sad epistle, dictated by my heart, and written in its tears, influence him for his own sake!---alas! for the sake of a poor *unborn* creature, which his conduct may rob of existence!---For *myself*, I only ask to be no more deceived:---and no more shall I be so; for something seems to tell me that the final blow is struck:---the dim-

ness of death half-closes my eyes, and confuses every object.

Adieu, my only friend! and if this should be my last farewell, accept the whole remaining fervor of my heart—May every promise which fortune ever made me, be transferred to my Amelia! ---May---but can I ask for you one virtue you do not possess, or one felicity which God has not already given you?—Alas! may your husband always know the value of the blessings he possesses!

I cannot but fancy that I had something more to say; yet nature fails me, and I struggle in vain to think on.

LETTER CXXXVIII.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

Rochdale.

AFTER riding all day in a dilatory manner, as if flying but to be pursued, I put up here for the night; where at

length I was overtaken by a messenger from my wife : transported at sight of her hand, I kissed the letter as the omen of conciliation, and tearing it open, was thunderstruck as I read it.—Even now I am not recovered from my astonishment. Was there ever such an interesting composition !---now all refined sense—now only eloquent nonsense. One thing, however, is obvious, that she consents to give me up for ever :---strange beyond imagination is that decision ! How acrimoniously does she speak of my sweet suffering cousin !---Cecilia, she would have disdained thus to speak of you !---Mark too with what address she throws upon me the whole odium of this separation.

Sometimes, it must be owned, I do not understand her ;---yet, amidst a thousand incomprehensibilities, how pious, noble, animated, is the conclusion of the letter !---Her heart speaks indeed in every syllable : never could I have credited the extravagances imputed

to jealousy, but by the warping of a soul so perfect.

Yet surely her intellects must be disturbed:---for never, never can her reason be so blinded.---This most dreadful of all fears will be either removed or confirmed by her reply, for I answered the letter which I enclose on the moment.---I have written most tenderly; for, oh! I cannot resolve to wound her heart only for a fault in her temper.

While waiting her reply, I will lighten the interval by copying for you the beautiful rhapsody which perhaps touches me the more, because I never provoked it. The blots which her tears have made, and the frequent interlineations, shew how much her heart was affected while writing, and how little composed her head.

To Lord Westbury.

"From this, though foreseen, yet agonizing, trial, I had hopes, my Lord,

that your mere humanity would have exempted me: but, unbounded alike in love and in hatred, you first *make* my crime, and then command me to become my own executioner. Never, surely, was wife more severely afflicted; and I only supplicate God for strength to support his displeasure in yours. Was it not enough to hate me yourself, that thus you deliver me up to the hatred of the whole world? and with a kindness so barbarous too!—Your *fortune!* ah, what is that?—What your splendid seats to me if they no longer contain yourself? My world will be comprised in the little spot which you inhabit, till even a less shall comprise my ashes.—But, no—it is impossible that you should deliberately act thus! Your better reason has forsaken you, and you are only the unconscious inflictor of another person's revenge. At last, then, you deliver me up a helpless victim to the malice of that vile woman? I was not born to obey *her*, and may give her the appellation she merits.

"Ah! why did you recall me to life by your tears—your agonies—your short-lived virtues? I had, at length, torn you, even you, from my soul. Hope and desire lay dormant: I had exhausted complaint, and languished into tranquillity. My very being was on the verge of extinction. Have you then raised me from the earth, and fostered me in your bosom, only to make me die over again?

"But I forsake my purpose; let me answer yours, conformably to your *real* wishes and not your *feigned* ones.---Tears blind me.—My hand wants steadiness to guide my pen.—My head is totally bewildered. As obedience is, however, the only article of my duty depending on my will, you shall find by my strict observance of that, what it costs me to cease to *honour* you:—oh, that I could cease to *love!*—Dictate at your leisure whatever you think most advisable, and I will adopt, copy, and send it to you. *My* heart cannot so far belie itself as to *propose* a separation:—ah! how

then can yours? If I continue to relinquish in silence the soft indulgences of the lover and the wife, surely I might expect to be allowed those of the friend and the servant! Can you, indeed, tear from me, without the tenderness of one moment's preparation---even a last look---all the treasure of my life? Oh, my Lord, despotic is your power, and despotic your use of it!

"Yet do not conclude that the anguish of neglect, or disappointment, shall ever make me ungrateful or unjust. Fondly at the throne of God will my lips attest those vows pronounced at his altar, and nothing---no, *nothing* can cancel them. Resignation must now become at once my merit and my consolation. Declare, my Lord, whither you wish me to retire; and were it to the wilds of Africa you should find that I would not limit myself to professions.

"Yet, while thus with your own hand accomplishing my miserable fate, is it possible that you should yet esteem me?

—yet resolve to intrust me with your beloved daughters?—Dear inestimable proofs of a regard which may, perhaps, survive us! Devoted to deserving a trust so distinguished, I will dedicate all that remains of my days to making the precious children worthy of the noble name they bear. Alas! perhaps the only inheritors!—no son!—that cherished hope, to which I sacrificed my self-love, is extinguished. But the consciousness of having, even to the extent, fulfilled my duty, *shall* be my support. Subdued by a variety of woes, my heart is now humbled enough to accept with gratitude the slightest blessings. It is a crime against God and ourselves sullenly to reject the bounties he gives us, because we are deprived of that we most value. No—never can I be totally wretched while I know you to be well;—while I may yet hope that you will one day become wise, good, and happy;—while I am watching over your dear little blossoms, and tracing in each an increasing likeness to their father;—while I am still the dispenser of

your bounty to sickness and indigence ;--- while memory gives me back the happy hours which I have spent with you in the sweet conviction that I was beloved---in the blessedness of loving :---these are consolations which will pass away only with existence ; nor can even you take these from me. Alas ! I doubt whether death itself has power to annihilate feelings that seem interwoven with my soul.

" Imagine not that I shall ever by a word impeach your conduct, or seek to raise a reputation among the busy and the ignorant upon the ruin of yours. No---the moment which united our hands bound up our honour, interest, and estimation : nor has the mutual treasure suffered blemish or diminution in my person. Abjure me for ever when you know that I arraign you: alas ! I only lament an infatuation so extravagant. Your wife, my Lord, will never disgrace that noblest of titles, once the dearest source of her happiness, as the only one of her pride.

" But is it not too cruel to *accuse* me?

Truth and tenderness have so long governed your pen, that hardly can I now believe they have forsaken it: and I hourly examine my heart as though it were indeed culpable.---Just Heaven! are you rendered wretched by any whim of mine?---Can you assert this to God and myself? Where can my cruel duty extend if it requires me to open my arms to him who deliberately betrays those vows so sacredly sealed, so fully relied on!---*and for whom, my Lord, are they betrayed?* I will not increase the confusion which my question must cause.

"Above jealousy, incapable of surmise, nothing but ocular demonstration could have excited a doubt in my bosom, and that extinguished doubt by certainty. Yet, over myself alone do I arrogate any authority; nor have I a wish to control you. Give, if you choose it, the softest hours of your life to some happier woman: I ask but to pass mine in solitude and tears. Surely we might come to this composition;

nor need you forsake that home which I will never by a word render odious to you.—Ah! why become an exile till your wife tyrannically interferes with your pleasures? It is the will, perhaps, of that odious woman which determines you to oppose your own heart, and wound mine. Yet, can even hers be depraved enough to delight in increasing the vices of mankind, by adding another melancholy instance to the many which seem to prove matrimony and happiness indeed incompatible? Will she not allow you to retain even the *appearance* of those virtues for which you were celebrated? and can you resolve to make this sacrifice? Oh, think that it is for your own sake I urge this consideration! *Respect yourself* is my earnest, my only intreaty. On my knees do I conjure you to consult the dignity of your own situation, nor authorise every petty enemy to the good order of society, to take shelter under the failure of a nobleman so distinguished. For the sake of example, condescend to

deceive the world: in such a case, dissimulation is almost meritorious. If you must have illicit pleasures, let them, at least, be secret ones; and allow me to bear neglect, that I may imagine I have saved you from disgrace.

"And now, my Lord, I approach a conclusion; too well, perhaps, forseeing how little all that I have been able to urge will avail against such a prepossession. It may only supply amusement to ——: but let me not sully my paper with a name so detestable!

"Do me and yourself the justice to preserve this letter. Time may give it a value in your eyes which it will now want. When the tears of your wife (allow me to repeat that consolatory appellation—all the distinction, all the comfort I now have left) shall have ceased, they will yet, perhaps, flow to your imagination. Then will you know the strength of the love which she prays may be eternal. It is her hope of a re-union in a better world which alone can sustain

her against the separation resolved on in this. Alas! it is, perhaps, the liveliest joy she expects there. But when that hour shall arrive—when the hand once joined to yours in the presence of God, and now so eagerly employed in your service, shall be powerless as the pen which it at this moment guides—when she shall have resigned even the right of bewailing your errors, and this faint transcript of her heart will be all that remains of it, estimate justly her character who found the pride of bearing your name, and the pleasure of living in your arms, secondary blessings only; since she had the resolution to forego the latter the moment she thought you less worthy: and oh! when this late conviction of your Cecilia's good conduct comes, may it be the means of restoring you to God and yourself, though ages should elapse ere she is allowed to rejoice in your conversion!

"Correct the noble nature which God has given you, my Lord, for your *own sake*—the dearest by which I can implore

you; and be assured that while I have power to form a prayer, or recollection to utter one, my first will ever be—That the Almighty may render you the convert of reason rather than of misfortune, and, in his own good time, re-unite you to your afflicted, but obedient, wife.

* * * *

"I see, on reperusing your letter, that you speak of my recalling you.—Can you then recall yourself? for how shall I bear to meet you unless you can give me back that most precious of all treasures—your heart? Should it be possible for me, indeed, to recover that, oh! tell me at once the means; and if any false shame deters you from seeking one who may sorrow, but knows not how to reproach, allow her to seek you. If, on the contrary, I am no longer the object of your affections, how cruelly would your enforced return add to my sufferings!—Ah, let us not meet till I have, at least, subdued my wishes to my fortune!"

* * * * * *

You have before you the whole of Cecilia's astonishing epistle, which I think I the less understand the more I consider it. *I deliver her up* (as she says) *a helpless victim to the malice of a vile woman!* Can she so injuriously term the interesting Diana? Can jealousy sanction both acrimony and injustice? It is possible that Mrs. Seaton may have revenged her own cause by some well-fabricated falsehood. Yet, what ocular demonstration can it be that my mistaken love speaks of with such an air of melancholy conviction?

The whole epistle is so incomprehensible that I am in doubt which of us has a bewildered intellect. Yet surely it cannot be Cecilia; for such a noble transcript of the heart, as she elegantly terms her letter, seems to require the fullness of every power and passion. That you know all her provocation, I here make peerlike protestation, standing up, uncovered, my hand spread on my heart: Is it not thus we are to act in due form?

Have peeresses the same privilege I wonder? for I have known many a little nymph who would have stopt short at her *oath*, though she would not have scrupled a hundred false promises. I think, I shall make Cecilia take her *bible oath* of my breach of the matrimonial vow; and then——, why then I must conclude that some left-handed genius conveyed me, when napping, into the arms of the Duchess; and, if so, the aërial pimp might have added a jog to the favour, and insured my gratitude: or else, that this dear girl of mine has gone mad with jealousy on a vague report, and takes all the fiction of her own brain for absolute realities. However, as we may scribble on for a week without coming to a right understanding, I am determined to spare our horses, our heads, and our fingers, by returning faster than I went; and submitting this mysterious grief to a regular discussion. So, allons, Patrick!—

Adieu! the post waits for this; and the boy shews a proportionable increase

of impatience every time he blows his horn.

* * * * *

By what fortuitous circumstances are we, sometimes, Frank, enlightened!—I had hardly sealed and sent my letter off, before I repented. Patrick ran to fetch it back, at the moment the bag was closing; and the post-master, misled by the sight of a coronet, gave him the packet of another person. I looked not on the cover, but heedlessly tore it open. What a scene did I discover when the well-known hand led me to peruse it!—My suffering love, thou hast then reason on thy side, and art, after all, wholly an angel! How does the epistle of this fiend serve to expound thine! Oh, that I could wring a drop of blood from her callous heart for every tear which she has drawn from thy eyes!—She shall not, however, escape. I cannot be far behind her carriage, and I will follow, that I may mortify and disgrace, although, alas! it is out of my power to punish, her.

Send me back the inclosed execrable letter, without losing a single post. It is my vindication, should Cecelia doubt my assertion: but, she will not.—Ah! when did she fail to rely upon my honour?

LETTER CXXXIX.

LADY KILLARNEY TO MISS RIVERS.

Where are ye? Crown me, shadow me with laurels,
Ye Spirits who delight in just revenge!
If cold *chaste* mortals censure this great deed,
Warn them they judge not of superior beings;—
Souls made of fire,
With whom revenge is virtue.

YES, Eliza, I *have* achieved this hazardous adventure, which made even you tremble!—Air-built is the castle of happiness! it falls of itself, even if no rude breath assails it!—Yes, this *wonderfully faithful* pair are alienated, wretch-

ed, separated! Oh! how the thought delights me! I could watch that fragile form while it wasted, "as roses silently in limbecks fade;" and when the last breath quivered on her livid lips, start up, and cry, *I* did it!---I *hated*---I *despised* ---and I *destroy!*

My soul is tuned to the highest pitch, and I can scarcely avoid penning the particulars in blank verse.---Pardon my silence hitherto; I would not write one line on a subject where a defeat would have made me eternally ridiculous. Did I not tell you that I knew the master-string of each heart? and are not pride, delicacy, and generosity, as capable of being wrought to our purposes as the more impetuous passions? In truth, they are more easily managed, since silence is ever their refuge.

The most mortal contempt has succeeded in my mind to a blind and extravagant love. I think I do not hate the affected wife more than the insolent husband: how then could I resolve to

leave them in calm possession of a felicity obtained at my expence, and maintained in my despite? No, I vowed to myself from the moment when we all met at Ranelagh, that they should not know the sweets of virtue without some of her bitters; nor would I know the bitters of frailty without some of its sweets.

They are both gone towards home. How I fancy to myself the disgusted pair! Each secretly swelling as the insulted person! What would I give to be invisible for one hour, that I might glory in witnessing the triumph which I have ensured! He brushed out of the house this morning alone and undrest; and that naturally gallant man, whom I have seen stoop to recover the glove of a sempstress, now seemed not to know a pretty woman from a post. Three hours afterwards, inveloped in sarsnet, crept down his *dear Cecilia*, white as her cloak, surrounded by maids and essence-bottles: with some difficulty she ascended the post-chariot, and ordered the man to

drive slow. *Slow*, my dear, even while following her paragon of peers!

But I defer gratifying your impatience. And here let me thank you for your happy thought concerning my disguise. A *cowl* has covered many a precious mischief; but there has ever been an innocent dulness in a *wig*, till it was adjusted to my temples. The pains which I had taken to discover where Lord Westbury was to lodge, and to obtain a ground floor for the Rev. Mr. Sainthill, are not unknown to you. Neither can you forget the affectionate adieus of that amiable ecclesiastic, when with his attentive housekeeper, Mrs. Brissac, he set out for York, where he arrived just time enough to be the harbinger of his noble neighbours. An attack of my old *bilious* complaint *(as I foresaw)* came on. No wonder indeed that my gall should overflow at the sight of this "odious happy pair." Here then we were, in our enemy's very intrenchments. Many manœuvres were likely to

prove dangerous, as well as unnecessary; and stratagem was preferable to valour. To gain an officer near our adversary's person was the first object; and this I resolved should be his aid-de-chambre, Monsieur Alton. First, because I had long since observed in him all those little vanities which make a bribe doubly tempting; and next, because, while his lord paid due devoirs to the mistress, Alton had not overlooked the maid; nor had he any reason to complain of Brissac's scorn. How easily then could she renew her intimacy with him, when under the same roof! And has there ever been a man, from the father of all, able to resist a bribe, when persuaded to accept it by the woman whom he loved? So far I soon succeeded. I bought Alton's fidelity. But he must think I loved mischief dearly, to pay such a price for it; since the rogue had the conscience to rate his integrity at a thousand pounds. Afraid that delay might make him double his terms, and being resolved to double my

satisfaction, by outwitting the mercenary puppy, I gave him a note, as a deposit, which, by mutual consent, was to be committed to Brissac's care. Necessity soon levelled ranks, and the woman with whom he had never hitherto dared to exchange a second sentence became, for the time, his equal. Would you have thought that he possessed confidence and adroitness enough to profit by this? Yes, he had *long sighed at humble distance for me*, truly; *he had* stifled a *vain* and *hopeless passion*. I half forgave the knave for his address; and had he not crammed something of *matrimony* into the speech, should not have resented it so mortally. My disdain, however, availed but little: I had caught a Tartar. He protested, that nothing but an ungovernable passion could have won him to injure so good a master; and since that had no merit in my eyes, he was determined to expiate his fault by an immediate confession of it. Here was a tormenting wretch! But the duce is in it if he *outwits me*, cried I to

myself; and therefore came down from my stilts by degrees---talked of dreading the censures of the world, &c.---but did not know what *time* might do in his favour. Down the poor dupe fell at my feet, to assure me that he should be the happiest of men if I meant what I said; but hoped I would pardon his presumption in intreating that I would give him a promise under my hand. Here was a wretch for you! Caught in my own toils, afraid of being exposed one way if I eluded the other, I lost three days in humiliation, conditioning, and at intervals threatening. Brissac, by my orders, manœuvring him with her jealousy, which he soothed with a *frank*, and I dare swear *true*, declaration, that he wished to marry me only to make his fortune; nor had a grain of love for any woman but herself. At length she proposed that I should really give him the promise he exacted, on condition that she, Brissac, should keep it, as well as the note. This ac-

commodation took place, and Alton's scruples wholly subsided.

It was the evening of the last assembly before our plot could be sufficiently considered and adjusted: for as Lord Westbury always slept in his dear Cecilia's chamber, it was not easy to get him out of it, without giving rise to suspicion. Another room was however made ready for him, in the hope that he would stay late, which really happened. Hearing, when he came home, that his Lady was more indisposed than usual, and had ordered him a separate chamber, he retired to it very readily. I knew that it had been always his custom to drink a glass of water, *and took care to prepare it*. Alton dashed the whole with a little wine, lest, as his Lord was heated, the water should hurt his health; and a few minutes threw the *unsuspecting* peer into a sleep so profound, that no noise we made in the room was able to wake him. All was now ready for the master-stroke;

and, with a heart beating with mischief, and in an undress of my own, I entered Lord Westbury's chamber, nor did my reposing by his side disturb him. Alton now repaired to the door of his lady's room, where in an audible voice he told her woman, who was waiting the return of my lord, that he had gone into another chamber, from finding himself feverish, but would not have my Lady know it *for the world*. He was no sooner gone than the alarmed invalid started up, as I had foreseen, and, slipping on her morning gown, stole tiptoe to the apartment of her lord, and setting down the light, advanced to the bed; where, with a heart bounding with malice, as eagerly as it ever did with delight, I appeared to be buried in a sleep as profound as his lordship's.—

> But such a slave, so wan, so woebegone,
> Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night.

What would I have given to have had one single glance at her face, when

she first suspected that he had a compa-nion, and another when she perceived that companion to be *me!* A faint exclamation, and her reeling against the foot pillar, shewed the effect which the surprise and discovery took upon her. She then opened the curtains still wider, yet flattering herself that she had erred, at least as to the woman: but no, she too plainly saw that it was *me*, positively *me*; when, hastily tottering to the light, she retreated, with even more caution than she had entered. I now ventured a look; she stopped one moment at the door, and casting her eyes over our scattered garments, she turned them towards the bed with such a mixture of contempt and agony, that the pang must have gone through her vitals, and half revenged me. As soon as I thought her safe in her own apartment, I flew to mine, and amused myself for some days with accounts of their silent chagrin. Brissac, in the interval, for certain considerations restored my note, and promise of mar-

riage given to Alton, both of which I destroyed: nothing therefore remains on proof against me; and should the plot ever transpire, I mean to deny all share in it, with a fashionable assurance--treat Alton, if he ventures to accuse me, as a dupe or a madman, and dare him to proceed in the charge.

Thus have I accomplished a desperate revenge; and thus only could I have accomplished it. Dare *every thing*, when you dare *any thing*. A petty plotter never succeeds. Happy was the hour when my character acquired this firmness! Am I now less followed or admired? No! Those whom the coldness of temperament, or tyranny of custom, restrain within the silly bound called *virtue*, ever envy the happy individuals whom they agree to despise, and are the constant victims of an idol set up by themselves. "Let wealth, let honour, wait the wedded dames;" ay, pr'ythee *let* them! they need both, to compensate for the neglect which they experience almost always from the

world, and often from him to whom they have sacrificed their freedom. No such hard-earned commendations for me! The other sex gave us no voice in the making of those laws by which we were to be enthralled, and we must be errant fools not to defy them, whenever we can do it with safety to ourselves.

I have not told you the curious revenge which our indignant heroine projected, to mortify her dear for his supposed infidelity:—only banished the naughty man from her apartment! A punishment like this ought not to become public, lest it should tempt the few husbands who are honest to wander. But how does his Lordship behave? say you. Oh! with true English dignity, and sullen silence. How incomparably would she punish herself, did not he shew by these grave airs that she punishes him!

Adieu! Alton is in arms about the promise, and I must begone. I shall assume my own character at the next stage; cross the country to Holyhead;

and, if he follows me to Ireland, I can muster a regiment of white boys with a word. Adieu again!

LETTER CXL.

TO LORD WESTBURY.

(Inclosing the unfinished letter meant for Mrs. Forrester.)

St. Edmund's Vale.

NO more epistles, I beseech you, my Lord, for God's sake, and your Lady's! The last which you dispatched has been but too effectual: since from the moment that Cecilia finished her answer, strength and intellect have almost wholly failed her. She was writing the enclosed (which of course must be meant for you, and I have sent it therefore without perusal), when she was seized with pains so violent, that by her groans alone were we apprised of her suffering.

This extraordinary frolic, my Lord,

has already cost you an heir, and may yet rob you of a being ten thousand times more valuable. Lady Westbury is in a high fever, and you are the only object of her delirium: she implores you not to forsake her till she is in the grave, in terms which almost break the hearts of those who are hovering round her. It is impossible that any of us should conjecture how misconception or disagreement should arise to such a height between you: but that Cecilia is blameless I would pledge my life; though were she otherwise, you would not be acquitted for endangering her in such a situation, and with a constitution already so broken. Is this the love you both boasted? Commend me then to peace and indifference.

The doctors have both been here, and, far from quieting my fears, they agree in declaring that she is in a high and dangerous fever, from which every thing may be apprehended, if her mind is not relieved from the anguish it now struggles with. You, and you only,

can restore her tranquillity: fly then home, my Lord, with the utmost expedition: if you delay, not one moment's peace can we know. If I do not see you here to-morrow morning, Sir George, for aught I know, may lose an heir as well as ——; but I would yet hope you do not merit the reproaches of

S. HARINGTON.

LETTER CXLI.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

St. Edmund's Vale.

THE idle event of the idle pursuit on which I set out when I closed my last will perhaps attract your attention, and employ mine.—Oh, Frank! not even friendship could induce me to address you at a crisis like this, were not any moment of my life more supportable, on recollection, than the present one.

Actuated by the bitterest rage, I

followed the infamous destroyer of my happiness on the Chester road; but happily did not overtake her till my exhausted spirits gave reason power to operate. I then recollected that, however successful her arts had proved, they came not within the cognizance of the law; and by what other means could I hope to punish a woman? In my exasperated frame of temper, I almost believed that such conduct might authorise my dispensing with those laws which I had some share in protecting, and that I might perhaps best do my duty to society by limiting a power which was always exerted for the destruction of good order and innocent happiness. Yet this again was but the conclusion of an irritated mind: for how, in a well-governed and populous kingdom, could I seize by force a lady of rank almost equal to my own, while surrounded by her servants, and guarded by her title? Far from finding this exploit considered as a public benefit, reason told me that I should incur

every suspicion but the true one; and must at length think myself happy if I was thought only a madman or a fool.

I know not whether I should not have flown homeward when these considerations had calmed my rage, but that the scoundrel who abetted her project came across my mind. This villain, Alton, excited in me the bitterest indignation; for I had raised him from the lowest rank of menials to the consideration almost of a gentleman; intending, as he well knew, hereafter to provide for him. Thus circumstanced, his treachery had every aggravation.

From the intercepted extraordinary letter, I learnt that the leave of absence, which he had obtained from me on some other pretence, must have been solicited only that he might pursue the persecuting fiend, who, with the craft of the devil himself, had defrauded her very agent. My rank, and the name of his master, would empower me to seize him wherever he might be found. Yet it was very

certain that, criminal as I knew him to be, the law could not do me any justice; and I could only, while I expelled him with ignominy from my service, prevent his obtaining a similar situation in another family. This at least was an indispensable duty; and an advertisement which I sent off to the London papers will, I think, effectually preclude him from every such employment.

I had now reached Warrington, and, having rode on horseback all the way, doubted not but that I had gained ground on those who travelled in a carriage. I turned into the inn here, with my usual impetuosity; and almost ran against a post-chaise, which was as hastily turning out of the yard. In a moment my attention was fixed, for in the carriage I saw Lady Killarney and her maid; while, in the grasp of constables and waiters stood the villain whom I sought. Inexhaustible in finesse, and not at all aware that I had in her own hand the precious fabrication, Lady Kil-

larney expressed familiarity and joy at sight of me; and intreated that I would do her justice on an insolent servant of mine, who, either from intoxication or frenzy, had detained and insulted her with the most extravagant demands and reports. --" Would I could execute that justice, Lady Killarney, which you so boldly claim!" cried I, half indistinct, through bursting passion, " then would I make you as memorable a monument of justice, as you have made yourself of sin. But Heaven permitted not your last plan to take effect. Not content to traduce, as you long since did, the angelic Cecilia, and bow her youth down to the grave with sorrow, even *yet* do you pursue her, and reduce me to execrate (as here I solemnly do) the moment when first I sinned with you, and put my peace within your power. Fly, Madam, to some spot where you are unknown; for, in justice to those whom you might dupe, I shall publish every artifice which your diabolical ingenuity has suggested to destroy

my repose. A respect due to my own character has too long kept me silent, but an injury like this last cancels all sense of decorum. Never, never shall I be able to forgive myself for having suffered your name to be joined to mine, even by the most licentious of ties."---"Are *you*, too, Lord Westbury," cried she, with an air of surprise and composure, "out of your senses, as well as Alton? or does your wife, by a cruel misrepresentation of my actions, incite you to treat me with indignities which will most disgrace yourself?"---"*A misrepresentation of your actions*, say you?" returned I, with the bitterest contempt. "Cecilia would, indeed, if she ever spoke of you, misrepresent them; for how could she imagine their iniquity! Go! you dishonour the sex of woman; and one less perfect than the dear creature whom you have last injured could not redeem it in my esteem. This, however, Lady Killarney, will be your final triumph over her and me. This letter will shew you

how your deep-laid scheme came to my knowledge." I threw into the chaise the envelope of her epistle to Miss Eliza Rivers. As she surveyed it, the fury glared openly in every masculine feature.—" I congratulate you," cried she, at length, with superlative insolence, " yes, I congratulate you on this acquisition; assured as I am of success, it even adds to my pleasure that you should know the ridiculous means by which I obtained it. Your *redeemer of the female sex* is, however, if I mistake not, beyond your reach. The blow is through *her* heart at least. Adieu! Be warned henceforward how you *offend a woman*." She now haughtily gave the sign to her servants, and they drove away like lightning, while I absolutely fell from my horse in a fit of passion. I cannot recollect what I said or did in my frenzy, but Patrick very prudently sent for a surgeon to bleed me. Recovering myself at length, I called loudly for Alton, who had vainly tried to escape, as soon as Lady

Killarney's departure seemed to acquit him of her charge; but my servants, without knowing what crime I imputed to the wretch, kept him till I should signify my intention. It was some satisfaction to hear that he was yet in my reach: and I now thank Heaven for limiting my influence; since, in the humour in which I then was, I might have used an arbitrary power too cruelly.

The scoundrel was immediately brought before me, with every visible sign of insanity. His hair wild and staring, hands bound, and a countenance where conscience had impressed both guilt and misery. Bitterly did I reproach him with sinning against a master so naturally indulgent, that he could urge no plea in his own excuse. He knelt down, and assured me, that, from the very moment in which he had yielded to the temptation, he had not ceased to repent uniting in the base attack upon my peace; and should submit with as much contrition and humility to any sentence which

I might now pass on him as if I were Almighty God: that only one extenuation could he urge, nor need he perhaps remind me, that the woman who misled him had already deceived men much wiser: he had immediately discovered how desperate his own situation had by her means become; but whatever his future fate might prove, he should think little of its evils, after he had forfeited for ever what most he valued, my confidence and regard. He concluded with a solemn asseveration that nothing but shame had hindered him from declaring to me the whole ungenerous contrivance, when he perceived how deeply it had sunk into the heart of his Lady: but the *certainty* in that case of losing what now he found himself alike condemned to lose, had sealed his lips; till finding that, by the treachery of Brissac, he was doubly robbed of his reward, he resolved, as soon as he had overtaken Lady Killarney, and extorted from her the recompence which his previous agreement in-

titled him to claim, to explain the whole odious occurrence to me, and embark for America directly.

Humbled thus before me, and making this most mortifying acknowledgement, the poor wretch gave it its whole effect on a heart not naturally obdurate or ungenerous. I recollected that he was no more than a man, nay, a young and handsome one, obvious to every temptation, and very unable to resist the devil in the shape of a rich and insinuating woman. I now half repented writing the advertisement which I had sent off, and I warned him of its consequence: bade him amend his modes of thinking, and renounce for a while a name that I had marked as synonimous to ingratitude; nor forget that, whatever his future views might be, he had lost all right to refer to me upon any occasion. I could not but add some pointed remarks upon his behaviour towards my wife, who, possessed of full power to regulate the house in which she was to preside, had never

dismissed a single domestic whom she found in it; and had shewn him peculiar regard, as one who had uniformly respected her before her rank entitled her to the distinction. Throwing him my purse, I now ordered him to withdraw, and, turning towards the window, forbade all reply. He retreated, in silence and tears, to the door, and, leaning his head against it, sobbed aloud. I looked round to reprimand his continued intrusion, and observed that his hands were bound. To save him the mortification of mentioning this disgrace, I rang, and the entrance of a servant released him.

Although only a few moments more had passed before I had yet further cause to punish Alton, I could not regret that I had treated him with lenity. Generosity is the most cutting of all reproofs to a heart not insensible to shame; nor did Alton's appear to be so. In short, moderation might have a happy effect on his conduct, and was absolutely due to the dignity

that I could wish should ever regulate mine. . . . . .

Could I be alone one moment and not fancy that I heard the cries, the groans, the unconscious anguish, of my beloved? How knew I but an hour, nay a moment, might rob my life of all which can give it value? Oh! how did I implore the Almighty to leave some incitement to virtue upon earth, by sparing her who is its visible representative! and to what an extravagant delusion had our happiness been sacrificed! To its improbability alone its success seems owing. Hardly yet can I forgive myself for suffering the fiend to escape! but such an example of guilt must certainly be designed as an example of Divine vengeance; nor ought I to arrest the attribute of God himself, in presuming to punish. Were I to do so, ought not I to begin with myself?--- That I could *ever* be misled by a wretch so abandoned!—for no reproach can appertain to me as the seducer of this

woman. She had adroitness enough to seduce a hundred such weak, vain, credulous ——: what term is there in language which can half express the indignation and contempt I feel towards myself?

I comprehended now too clearly the ground on which the fury went.—Oh, fatal delicacy of a heart too generous! For, had I known the situation of my beloved, no artifice on the part of others, no weakness on her own, could have torn me from her! I should have wrung from her, by tenderness and importunity, the cause of her affliction and tears, and this terrible suffering had been prevented:—but a coldness and silent discontent, so unmerited on my part, wounded me to the soul; and I afterwards saw every thing through the false medium of offended pride.

How, now I know her motives in writing that apparently incomprehensible letter, do I venerate the dignified effusion of a mind exerting itself, beyond all praise, to soar superior to the agonies of

injured love, the feebleness at once of sex and humanity!---And has it soared indeed? This is the bright eccentricity peculiar to virtue---the wonder of every one but its possessor.

But, oh! my own stupidity again recurs!---I cannot forgive myself.---Gladly would I become all woman, and melt away in tears.---

From a train of reflections as pleasant as these I was recalled by an express from Lady Harington, with the news of my wife's dangerous miscarriage and critical fever. Most devoutly did I thank God that both of the people who caused her sufferings were beyond my reach. Leaping into a chaise, I would have made the horses fly. During my lonely drive, every agony I felt was doubled by perusing a fragment of a letter from my Cecilia to Mrs. Forrester, which Lady Harington had forwarded to me within her own, under the idea that it was meant for myself.---My best-beloved! of what art thou not capable! who, of thy whole sex beside, ever

bore such a wrong (imaginary as it was) in silence, or meekly gave herself up to the malice of surmise, rather than reflect on the conduct of him whom she had chosen! The discretion, tenderness, and grandeur of mind, displayed in this fragment of a letter, which was never meant for my eye, exceeded in effort even that addressed to myself, and must at any time have revived—nay, more than revived—my fondest affection. I shall treasure it as invaluable: yet I trust to you the original, that if ever the vice of my sex, inconstancy, should pervade a heart which vainly strives to merit one like Cecilia's, you may send it back to me within a blank cover; nor need you fear that the talisman will not instantly correct the foible.

It was dark before I could get home; yet in the avenue Percival was still lingering, and stopt the chaise: upon finding that it contained me, he flew to inform his amiable cousin, happy to carry the news first. Lady Harington, notwith-

standing her own condition, was a faithful attendant on her friend, and hailed my return with a blended warmth and coldness more engaging than all her vivacity.—Alas! from the resentment of my love I soon found I had nothing to apprehend! she was in a state of delirium, and no longer could distinguish her friends from her servants.—Oh! as I stole into her chamber, how did I accuse Heaven, earth, and every being concerned; but, above all, myself! Her voice met my ear long before my eyes beheld her features. She was running her hands over the imaginary keys with astonishing celerity; while, true to every fancied note, her voice gave all its variety of melody and expression. She had torn off her cap, in spite of the efforts of those around her; while her long luxuriant hair curled over her ivory throat and swelling bosom. Never did consummate beauty present a charm like those which my heart found in the bright irregularity of her graces; but, perhaps,

the more striking from the wandering of her intellect. That vivid glow, which was once the soft effect of youth and sensibility---now, alas! of sickness and delirium ---gave a wild lustre to eyes yet full of the heart, while every beauteous atom seemed to enrich and adorn the other. In short, by a magic for which I cannot account, her person seemed to have gained in attraction all that her mind had lost.

I sat by her bedside the whole night, during which she never closed her eyes above a moment; starting frequently from the necessary repose into a convulsive sob, or a tremulous laugh. At intervals I employed myself in re-considering that magnanimous effort of her mind to soar superior to sex and humanity. What pang can wound the heart like unconsciously striking at that most dear to you?---but to have fresh proofs of elevation produced by those very sufferings, is more than we can endure.---Ah! how in one moment can our dearest blessings

become our horror, our affliction!--The matchless mind of my Cecilia but compels me to loathe, to abhor, myself! It is I who have made a hideous chaos of those exquisite ideas which were once arranged with a skill worthy Him who comprised them in her soul, and there fixed his visible perfection!--Oh! may he yet restore her and punish me---me only!---the sin, the sorrow, must, alas! be mine: and greatly, perhaps, am I punished---in retrospection! Nor would I have the base incendiary spared---that volunteer of Satan, intent to sow a mischief as deadly as his own, though more confined! Let her chastisement bear a proportion to her sin!--let a long, long poverty---a lingering malady---an ugliness unmatched---become her portion!---ills gross as those alone can touch her callous nature. Let an incessant peevishness point all the stings of conscience, till hell itself become as a change, a wished-for refuge! Oh! may her whole life be like this miserable moment of his whose greatest

crime was sinning with her, and thus giving her the power of rendering him a villain!

From reflections like these I was frequently recalled by the tender complaints of my Cecilia; in which I found so much nature, love, and reason, that I impatiently answered them, rejoiced at finding it in my power to calm her mind. Judge what must be my affliction to see that she took me for every person by turns but myself; and, calling in agonies for me, even while I held her in these arms, lamented in bitterness inexpressible that she should never live to see me again! She once wandered so extravagantly as to fancy herself dead, and began a strain so slow, solemn, and angelic, as well might suit the heaven into which she supposed herself entering. Afraid of the agitation attending this transport, I drew near and addressed her. She started---shrunk back----gazed intently on me---then, shaking her head, relapsed into silence and meditation.---" My Ceci-

Ha surely knows me?" cried I, tenderly. ---"No," returned she, sighing; "but I *have* known one like you---*very* like you; --but he," added she, mournfully, and after a pause, "left me---loved me not---he would never, never greet me thus kindly!" ---At this involuntary, uncertain recollection, I laid my head on her hand, on which she felt the burning tears. She drew it hastily away. "Do we weep too *in heaven?*" cried the angel, passionately; ---"I thought that here we should have no weeping or gnashing of teeth! I cannot, however, shed one drop;---and yet I have a cause---I will try to tell you all when I awake---and pray, till then, hold my hand fast---fast;---for it soothes me to see that some one can weep for me."---She laid her throbbing temple on my hand, and fixing on mine her heavy melancholy eyes, sunk gradually into a slumber, which the faculty had almost despaired of. Still should my hand have pillowed that precious cheek, but that they tore me from her. They say that my presence ag-

gravates her malady, by urging her wandering senses upon a recollection to which they are yet unequal.---If this repose fails to restore her intellects, I shall have an evil to dread worse than even death.

* * * * *

Rejoice with me, my friend !—Seven quiet hours of rest has my beloved known: though weak and exhausted, she now recollects those who are around her, and is impatient as myself for our re-union.

LETTER CXLII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

St. Edmund's Vale.

JOY to our dear Amelia, the worthy Forrester, myself, and the whole world ! Let who will tell you the bad news of the house, I am resolved to reserve for Sophia Harington the pleasure of communicating the good. Our sweet suffering Cecilia

is at last likely to recover; and the happiest of all created beings. Do you know that the dear creature professes herself more willing to die now, than she was three days ago!—I shake my head at this declaration, nor can believe one word of it. However, I am glad to hear her say this, as it adds to my conviction, that she is not so near her beatification as I yesterday thought her.

Mercy on us! what a life have we all had for these last eight-and-forty hours! It is well my constitution is not so delicate as Lady Westbury's, or I *should*, ere this time, have been a yard and a half less in the waist. You had very good luck, let me tell you, my friend, in being absent at this distracting juncture; when we were all ready to quarrel with each other for not knowing things which not one of the company had ever been told.—"Surely, Marianne, *you* know," cried I, peevishly. —"How should she know?" returns my spouse, more peevishly still; "*your* curiosity, indeed, might have found out the

truth."—" Oh, never, for Heaven's sake," groaned Percival, " lose your time in finding what it is distresses the angelic creature: her life, her life is at stake; save that, and you will learn her affliction afterwards: she may die while you are inquiring into the reason.—Would that I were a woman!" —" Would you were!" returned I angrily enough, " and an *old* one too; then your fretfulness would have as little effect on others as it has on me." I could not forbear saying this; as Marianne truly took his impertinent hint, and stood ready to run without knowing whither, or for what.

Then it was impossible to find Lord Westbury, and more impossible to trace his route. We soon however learnt that the married lovers had quarrelled; and willingly would I have laid his angry Lordship in his wife's place, as a fair punishment for his whimsies;—not but our Cecilia had some in turn. What think you, for instance, of sitting down to die in silence, only because her foolish man had changed his mind? It is well this occurred

in the country; in town they would have been paragraphed in a day or two.

We have all fallen upon Marianne for writing to you in the midst of so melancholy an uncertainty; and so affronted is the demure damsel, that she would as soon touch a wedding ring as a pen again. Nothing less than to relieve your mind, could, I verily think, have drawn me from Cecilia's bed-side; where sits Lord Westbury, happier, I really believe, than when first he had that honour. I do love *both* of them; and truth shall out, in spite of custom:—I was so enchanted with our good doctor's assurances of her amendment, that, without uttering a single syllable, I hugged the dear old soul, nor did I even recollect who he was. I thought Sir George and my Lord would have burst with laughing; nor did they leave off when, in excuse for disordering the economy of his physical wig, I assured him that I had taken him for Lord Westbury: indeed Sir George, rather ungraciously, reproached me with making a kiss the usual

expression of my joy; but he saves his own pride, by insinuating that no one values it except himself:—"A happy salvo, honest man!" cried I, "for an intolerable rudeness; but if I never kissed you *unless for joy*——You know the inference, and deserve it."

Had I genius for description, I should give you a treat in the re-union (as Cecilia calls it) of these married lovers;—I protest I have half a mind to try:—let me see if our friend's little desk conveys any inspiration to me.—It was late in the evening ere my Lord was allowed to appear *before* the screen; *behind* which we did not refuse him a constant station. With his usual dexterity he found out (what we had all separately despaired of) how to calm Cecilia; for he suggested that her delirium should be spoken of as a dream, and her sleep represented to have lasted but little more than an hour: we thus sunk on the dear creature, eight-and-forty. As we encouraged her every moment to expect my Lord, she insisted on being

raised in bed, and a little (true woman, you see, after all) *dressed* for his reception. Nobody but herself was astonished at her being overcome with this effort. At length I, with my own plump little person, representing connubial Juno, conducted in the stray wight, booted, and breathless. Cecilia bent eagerly forward, and held out both her hands to him; then raised them to heaven, and sunk in the arms of her sister and maid. I almost think it worth while to suffer all that she has suffered, for the touching, soft disorder of such a reconciliation. I opened upon an old book one day, with a description which seemed taken from our friend at that moment. I positively will not spoil a good thing, and will therefore go and rummage the breakfast-room for the identical book: and, as they say in those *tiny* volumes where we actually get our first taste for *letters*,—see, *here it is*:

Her eye did seem to labour with a tear,
Which suddenly took birth; but, overweigh'd
With its own swelling, dropt upon her bosom.

After, her looks grew cheerful; and I saw
A smile shoot graceful upward from her eyes,
As they had gain'd a victory over grief:
And with it many beams twisted themselves,
Upon whose golden threads the angels walk
To, and again from, heaven.

Now do you owe me two obligations: —first, for sending you Cecilia's picture, with even a flattered likeness; and next, a relique of poetry, written, for aught I know, by Methuselah himself, since the print is old enough to give that idea.

This matrimonial fracas has confirmed demure Miss Marianne in her plan of living and dying in single blessedness. You cannot think how full of thought, though, nor how pretty she looked, while she now and then cried out—"*This* then is matrimony! *this* is the happy state so boasted of! A fine blessing truly!" Item—these exclamations were always made in cousin Percival's absence.

As to me, busy and ardent as usual, I scolded every one for doing nothing; did but little myself; and yet found

every part of me tired but my tongue; —by exercising that unremittingly, I at last got my lazy husband to draw on his boots, with a promise to scamper half over the world (I leave it to you, and commentators, to discover whether I did not mean *wold)*, in search of our recreant Lord. To complete my vexations, he lamed Dido, then beat his groom, and finally returned so gloriously drunk, that all my bitter reproaches on his want of success had no other effect than the sooner to lull him to sleep.

Ned, poor Ned, on the contrary, commenced peripatetic, and lived between Lady Westbury's anti-chamber and mine; never failing, if any female popt her nose out of either apartment, to importune us, maugre a thousand huffings, with the worn-out question of—"How is she *now?*"

I will engage that *he* would have soon found Lord Westbury, had he undertaken to pursue him; but there was no persuading him that this would not be

officious and indelicate. Surely he should have married Cecilia, for he has just her own scrupulous sense of propriety. Then we knew not what we ought or ought not to do, till we could ascertain the cause of the quarrel, or which had most reason to be angry. *Such* a quarrel too, as strange as the rest, it is impossible that I should detail it to you; so, till Cecilia can, you must have patience. A woman, you may imagine, was one cause; for what mischief has ever happened (says Sir George in his last new commentary) in which we are not supposed to have a share? and if you conclude Lady Killarney to have been *the* woman, you will not be much mistaken in your guess. After having tolerated till now her impertinence, by allowing for her disappointment, I find myself finally so provoked, that I verily believe I could light a substantial pile, with the aforesaid lady on the top of it, with as much glee as the boys do a bonfire on a holiday.

With one vagary or other Lord Westbury, however, has certainly lost an heir;

though, entre nous, as his wife remains, that loss is not quite irreparable: the poor man, however, looks as ruefully as if it were: when his past sins cost him so dear, he will deserve no mercy if ever he should sin again.

Adieu! since I began this, our doctor has dismissed himself, and truly in good time. A doctor of five-and-twenty, is better than one of five-and-fifty, surely: (it is well Sir George did not see this; what the deuce possesses me to make so free with five-and-fifty?) Have I any thing more to tell you? No:—only that we are all in such excellent humour, that you would think the quarrel must have gone round. Marianne alone is unmoved. "The fair Stoic," Ned calls her, though *he* of all people has the least reason thus to apply that term. She, however, would die, rather than we should think this. Adieu, dear Mrs. Forrester! an abler pen will soon, I hope, make you amends for that of S. HARINGTON.

END OF VOL. V.

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